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# THE IRON HAND



BY  
HOWARD DEAN



12/8/71

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# THE IRON HAND

A STORY OF THE TIMES

BY

HOWARD DEAN

Founded upon Department Store Life

"I must confess to burning midnight oil to read 'The Iron Hand.'"

"I would like to see this book in every home."

"I arose at 2 A. M. to finish the 'The Iron Hand.'"

"'Uncle Tom's Cabin' number two."

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## PREFACE.

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IN presenting my little book to you, dear reader, I have tried to write something to help you pass away some of your idle time to your own satisfaction, and I hope my story will find a place in your heart as well as in your library. My characters are drawn from life, and I assure you their story is not half told. Nellie, Mike, Ole, and Little Jack are all very dear friends of mine; I hope they may become yours also, and that you will join me in laughing at and pitying them in the different phases of their lives.

THE AUTHOR.



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# THE IRON HAND

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## CHAPTER I.

### A STORY OF THE DEPARTMENT STORE.

"I SAY, girls, this thing must stop! I can't stand it any longer, and I won't, either!"

"Why, what are you in such a rush for, Nell?" said one of the girls addressed. "What's up now? You are trying to laugh and cry at the same time. You'll be having hysterics if you don't look out!"

"No; I'm not nervous, girls, but I'm so vexed I don't know what to do, and it's so funny, too, I can't help laughing. What do you suppose those horrid boys have done now?"

"Oh, they've been up to some of their pranks, have they?" said one of the three who had not yet spoken. "It's getting pretty monotonous, this sort of thing. I wish we could get even with them some way or other."

## The Iron Hand.

"We must do it, girls. We must do something to stop these scamps or they'll drive us away from school," said the first speaker.

"It seems so mean," said the girl who had spoken second before, "that so many of them should play such tricks upon us when there are only three of us. I don't believe they can be very brave or they wouldn't do it."

"Brave!" said Nell, the first speaker, contemptuously; "did you ever see a man do anything brave? They are the biggest cowards in the world, as a general thing. I believe we can play a trick on these boys and scare them half to death into the bargain, if we try."

"What have they been doing to you, Nell? Tell us," said the third speaker.

Nell put her hands up before her face and laughed. "You know when they put Doctor Jim up in your room, Grace?"

"Yes, I remember well; it was only a little while ago. How comical the old skeleton looked, sitting on the edge of my bed, with his legs one over the other and my new hat perched on top of his head."

"And Grace would never sleep in the bed again," said the third speaker, laughing.

"Do you suppose I'd ever sleep in that room

## The Department Store.

again after that? Well, I guess not. It makes me shiver every time I put that hat on now to think how it has been on that ugly old skull."

"Well, Nell, go on and tell what you have had to go through with," said Grace.

"Why, just now, when I went up to my room, as I opened the door I pretty nearly fainted, for there, hanging from the ceiling, was Doctor Jim. Those scamps had gone to my clothes and taken my underclothing—I can never look at one of them again, I know—and dressed him up in them and"—here she laughed as though she could not stop—"they had fixed him up with strings some way so that just as I started toward him to take him down he began to dance, and of all the capers he cut! Oh, it's too funny for anything. You must go and see for yourselves."

So they all repaired to Nellie's room, and there they found the skeleton dancing as she had said.

"It's awful funny, Nell," said Grace, after she had recovered from her laughter at the funny antics of the skeleton, "but we must do something to get even with them in some way."

"Let's do something to give them a good scare," said the third girl; "something that'll make their flesh creep and make 'em feel so cheap that they'll let us alone after it."

## The Iron Hand.

"All right. What'll it be?" said Nell.

"Let's take that horrible thing down first and get it out of the way," said Grace. "It makes me think of the man in the song who took off his skin and sat in his bones."

They took the dancing skeleton down and put it outside the door of the room and then sat down and began to plan.

"Let's put a lot of tacks in their beds," said Grace.

"Oh, no, that will never do," said the girl who had spoken the least of all.

"Why not, Jennie? you little goose. It would serve them just right to do it. I'd just like to, and then be where I could see them and hear 'em holler. It would be just fun for me."

"I'll tell you, girls. I believe I know a better way than that. Let's play some ghost trick on them and see how they'll stand that. I have an idea in my head. You know they meet somewhere and have a society of some kind. I expect they have some dreadful times there, don't you? If we could hide and in their ceremonies do some ghostly thing or other I believe we could scare them almost to death."

"Yes, but they'd do something dreadful to us if they caught us at it," said Grace.

## The Department Store.

"Yes, I suppose they would, but it's getting desperate, and we must do something, and I'm willing to take the chances. Let's all try and find out where this place is that they meet, and if there are any hiding-places, and then we can talk it over and see what we can do."

"All right," said Jennie, "but it makes me shake in my boots to think of it."

Nellie was determined to get even with the boys for the tricks they had played upon herself and her two girl classmates, and so during the week following the last episode she lost no opportunity of hunting around and questioning until she found where the college society met and she had laid her plans of operation.

"I have taken out some of the tiles, girls," she said, when they met the next time, "so that we can see everything that goes on, and I have fixed the electric light wire which furnishes the light for their room so that we can shut it off, and I think we can make it interesting the next time they meet."

"Oh, I'm afraid to try it," said Grace. "I want to see them punished, but I don't believe I've the courage to do anything like that."

"We must do it, girls, we must do it. If you don't help me, I'm going to do it alone."

## The Iron Hand.

The outcome of it was that one evening, not long after, the three girls found themselves, as Grace said, "skulking" along the walk toward where the boys met for their mystic rites.

"Here we are, girls," said Nellie. "Don't you feel as though you were burglars? I do; but we must do it, that's all."

They went down an old staircase that had remained unused for some time, and found themselves in a long, narrow room beneath the sidewalk. There was a door opening from it, once used, no doubt, as a coal cellar.

"My! I'm almost scared to death," said Jennie. "I believe if anything happens now I shall scream as loud as I can."

"Oh, you'll soon get used to it," said Nellie; "I've been here before and feel quite at home. Whatever you do, though, don't make any noise, for we will surely be discovered if you do. Here's where we can see what's going on," she said, removing a small tile from the wall. They all looked through.

"My! They must have some dreadful ceremonies," said Grace. "Did you see the skulls and bones in there?"

"They must bring the bones of all the subjects here, I think," said Nellie. "The scamps!

## The Department Store.

We'll give them something to think of before we get through with them, or I'm mistaken."

They sat still upon some old boxes that were strewn around, occasionally going to the peeping-place to see what was going on inside.

"My goodness, girls! What would happen to us if they found us out?" said Grace.

"They won't find us out," said Nellie. "They don't know anything about it, so don't be afraid."

"I wish I was in my room in bed," said Jennie. "I'm all of a tremble and I can't help it."

"I'm ashamed of you, girls; I'm right down disgusted with you. You'll make nice physicians, won't you, if you are as timid as this?"

"They're coming in," said Grace, who was looking through the hole in the wall. "They're taking their seats, and, as sure as anything, Walter Nicol is the chief conspirator."

"That's a good thing for you, Nell, if they do find us out, for if he killed us he wouldn't hurt you, that's a sure thing," said Jennie.

"Hush, girls. What are you taking about? There's no one going to hurt us, and you know it."

As the society proceeded with its work the girls watched by turns to see what they could see, and as they felt more at home as the ceremonies pro-

## The Iron Hand.

gressed, laughed and joked a good deal about what was going on and the position in which they were placed.

"I wonder what they're going to do with that fellow they had in there before they took their recess. I wouldn't like to be in his place," said Grace.

"Oh, they'll have a great time with him, no doubt," said Jennie. "Let him off half dead, I suppose, and then he'll wait for his turn to try and kill some one else."

"What in the world do you suppose they are going to do now, girls?" said Grace, who was taking her turn at peeking. "They're bringing in a lot of lumber. They're putting up a scaffold, as sure as anything," she said. After waiting a few seconds she continued: "Why, girls, I believe they're going to kill some one in there, just as sure as that I stand here. We must notify the police, girls; we must do it. This is not a secret society—it must be some dreadful conspiracy."

"Don't be foolish, Grace," said Nellie, somewhat disgustedly; "if you can't stand it to look let me see what's going on." Grace went to the aperture and looked in. She turned pale, the girls said, just as soon as she took her first glance.

## The Department Store.

She always denied it, but at any rate she stood looking intently in without saying a word.

"It must be some trick," she said, turning away and facing her companions. "They have what, to all appearances, seems to be a guillotine, but it must be a sham. It's your turn now, Jennie."

"No, thank you," said Jennie. "I don't care to see it. Grace, you can watch them."

"No," said Grace. "I'm going home. If there's going to be murder here, I'm going to get away from it."

Nellie turned, with a sneering look upon her face, as much as to say, "You're cowards, but I am not," and went up to the opening in the wall. Looking in, her hands slowly clinched themselves together; she drew herself back and, giving a terrific scream, turned, and stumbling over one of the boxes, fell heavily against a board partition, which giving way, precipitated her head first into a dark hole, where she lay moaning long after the other girls had fled and the students had stampeded upon hearing her scream.

# The Iron Hand.

## CHAPTER II.

### LITTLE JACK MAKES A DISCOVERY.

"COME on, Jacky; come on, my little gossoon. We must be going to work to earn our bread and butter. Bring him out, Jamie, me boy, and put him on the seat. It's you that likes to go with your daddy downtown and see the sights, ain't it, though?"

"Yes, I like to go with you, papa, and see all the horses and men and all the wagons and everything down there. I'll be glad when I get to be a big man like you, 'cause then my leg will be well and I can do as other people do!"

The father, sitting near him, looked at the little pinched face of his sickly child kindly.

"Yes, Jacky, then you'll be strong and well, I hope, and able to help your daddy when he's old."

"Yes, papa, I'll have a nice, red truck and a big, white horse and earn lots of money for you and mammy."

The father looked at the little, frail figure and

## A Discovery.

shook his head when he was not looking. "I'm afraid not, my poor little fellow; but we'll hope for the best," he thought.

The dray horse jogged along at his heavy trot, and as they proceeded slowly upon the way the driver whistled and sang, alternately, songs of the old home beyond the sea. He was soon hard at work, his dray loaded with boxes and barrels for his customers. The little, pale boy was never so happy as when, perched upon the top of the load, he swung the whip and shouted to old Susan to "git up," in imitation of his father.

He had backed up to the sidewalk in front of a store whose windows were full of various articles, showing it to be a notion store, and was unloading, when there came out of the door a tall, spare man, dressed neatly in black.

"Well, Mike, what have you for me to-day? Hello, my little man," he said to the boy. "You helping your father to-day?" He looked at him compassionately as he glanced at the brace upon his leg and the little thin hands.

Little Jack pulled off his cap to him and said: "I can whip the horse. That's all I can help papa, but I like to do that."

The storekeeper laughed kindly.

"I've three or four big boxes for you, Mr.

## The Iron Hand.

Jimmy," answered the drayman, "an' almighty heavy ones they are, too, sir. I'll have to ask you to send Swedey out to help me, I guess, for they're too heavy for me."

"All right, Mike. I want you to take a load out to Balgertown after you unload, if you can."

"If I can, sir! Well, I guess I can. I'll do it whether I can or not, sir, faith an' I will."

"I thought perhaps you could go because Tuesday's rather a dull day with you, usually, I know."

"I'll be ready, sir, just as soon as I get rid of this load, an' that won't be long."

Mr. Jimmy left, and in a few minutes there appeared the huge form of a man, whose hair and eyes told him to be of Swedish nationality.

"Hello, Irish! You here again?" he said, with that intonation of the voice peculiar to his people who come from the northern parts of Sweden.

"Faith an' I am, Swedey. Did ye jist wake up, or have ye got corns on your feet, that ye keep this Irish gintleman waitin' here this way? Come, git a move on ye, or I'll drive away an' tell the boss ye wouldn't help me."

The big Swede came forward with long strides and anger kindling in his honest face. "You tell de boss, will ye?" he said, in his sing-song tones.

## A Discovery.

"You get out de way now, or I'll tro' de box and you off togeder!"

Mike well knew the immense strength of the man, and jumped nimbly down, knowing he would do as he said if he didn't get out of his way. The big fellow laughed heartily to see him jump, and grasping hold of one of the boxes had it nearly upon the sidewalk before Mike could get hold of it to help.

"Ye must eat a heap of stockfish to make ye so strong, Swedey; faith an' I can smell it in yer breath clear over here; bah, an' it almost makes me sick, the shmell of it, by gorra."

"You git out the way or I'll make you think you a stockfish," he said, grasping the last box to be unloaded and landing it upon the walk with what help Mike gave him. "Hello! little boy," he said to Jack; "you want ride on Ole's back?"

Little Jack reached out his arms, as he had often done before, and was soon riding up and down the sidewalk with the giant jumping and prancing to make him laugh. "Poor little boy," he said, putting him down. "I hope you get well by and by. I think not," he said to himself as he turned away; "you be angel 'fore long, I guess."

Mike always liked to see Jacky happy, and he laughed and called to him as he rode on Ole's

## The Iron Hand.

shoulder: "Ye'll have one yourself, Swedey, some time, when ye find some Irish gal that'll marry ye, ye will."

"Me have Irish girl? No! Irish girl eat stockfish no day but Friday. You eat meat Friday, though," he said, laughing loudly and going into the store.

"Bad luck to ye, ye bla'guard!" called Mike, shaking his fist at him. "Bad luck to ye for givin' me some mate on Good Friday, and it was made to look so like fish that I didn't know the difference. Bad luck to ye, an' didn't it cost me a week's work to pay the pinnance for it? Father Murphy said, he did, when I told him, that an Irishman ought to know the difference between a pace of Swede fish an' a pace of pork. I'll get even with ye, too, some day, ye' grinnin' giant."

Mike was soon back at the store with his empty dray for the load Mr. Jimmy was to have for him. The last box to be put on was, Mr. Jimmy told him, for his daughter, and to be left at the college.

"Yes, I know, sir, where they make the new doctors," said Mike. "An' it's for Miss Nellie, is it, sir? God bless her, an' she's a fine girul. I'm mighty glad to do an errand for her."

"Remember and make her pay you, Mike; don't

## A Discovery.

forget that," said Mr. Jimmy, laughing, as he went inside. "She may want to beat you out of your drayage if you don't look out."

"Lave that to me, sir, lave that to me. I'll settle the drayage with her, never fear. Lord bless her," he continued, "she always gives me a dollar when I does anything for her, an' she's that kind and lovable to little Jack that I could do annything for her, I could."

There was quite a stretch of open country to be traversed and some time was passed upon the road. Like all sick children, little Jack loved flowers, and the fresh daisies and violets were so dear to him that his father had to get down more than once and pluck a handful from the fields as they passed by. The little boy fondled them and laid them beside his face; perhaps they threw a shadow of something more beautiful to come for little Jack. In due course of time they came upon the pavement again, and Mike was distributing his load at its proper places. He had left everything excepting the box for the college, and now he made his way in that direction.

"Oh, papa, what's that in the window there? See 'em go round! It's a real train of cars, papa. Let's get out and see it!"

Mike laughed and, jumping down, lifted the

## The Iron Hand.

little fellow out, and they stood and watched the mimic train for some time.

"What is that, papa?" said little Jack suddenly, stopping as they were going back to the dray.

"What, Jacky?"

"That noise, papa. Somebody's crying. Don't you hear 'em?"

"No. You're scared, Jacky. I don't hear anything."

"Put your ear down to the sidewalk, papa. Somebody's crying down there."

To please the little fellow Mike put his head down close to the walk and listened.

"Be gorra, somebody must be kilt down there by the noise they make." He listened again and a faint noise came to his ear. "Here, you! You policeman! Come here, quick!" he shouted to an officer who had been watching them from the nearest corner. "Put your ear down there an' listen!" he said to him when he came up. "Faith an' there's some one kilt entirely down there. Don't you hear him groan?"

The policeman, who had come running up, knelt down and listened. Jumping up and glancing around, he told Mike to leave the boy in the store and go with him. They went carefully down the stairs that the girls had descended by



*"My God! He said it's Nellie."*



## A Discovery.

the night before and into the little room where they had watched the mysterious ceremonies.

"For the love of mercy!" said Mike, looking into the dark hole where Nellie lay, unconscious from her fall, "what's that?"

The officer came quickly when he could see her feet lying there.

"You stay here while I go and get a light and ring for the ambulance," he said. "I'll be right back."

"Not by a jugfull," answered Mike. "You don't catch me stayin' in this buggerish place, not if I know myself."

"Well, stand at the top of the stairs, then, if you're afraid to be down there."

"'Fraid o' nothin', ye big baboon of a copper. Run away yerself an' ask Mike to stay."

The policeman soon came back with his light, and the ambulance was seen coming down the street. There had two men stopped upon the scene, and had been told by Mike that there was a young lady down there, "kilt or something," and when the policeman came up and called upon them to assist him they followed him down the narrow stairway. One was a young man, above the medium height, handsome and muscular; the other was a smaller man and older; he had black

## **The Iron Hand.**

hair and eyes and a large nose, and was of slight build. The policeman, looking around to see if his followers were there, went into the place where Nellie had fallen, and putting his light down looked into her face. The young man saw it, too, when, springing forward, his face as white as snow, he raised the fair young head upon his arm. "My God!" he said, "it's Nellie Jimmy! Have they got the stretcher there yet, officer?"

## Nellie Fascinates Mr. Toump.

### CHAPTER III.

#### NELLIE FASCINATES MR. TOUMP.

"It was you, was it, Walter, who found me down under the sidewalk there? I suppose I would have died if you hadn't happened along as you did." Nellie looked up gratefully into his face as she lay upon the bed at the hospital, where she had been taken after being found where she was. Walter leaned over her pillow and said that he had helped find her and that he was never so happy in his life as then to hear her speak to him. She looked up into his face again, timidly, and hers flushed as she saw what was written so plainly there. There was a silence now as Nellie lay still, and Walter smoothed the pillow with his hand. "And it was the old drayman's little lame boy who first heard me moan, was it?" she said. "I must have them bring him here that I may thank him. You are pretty well advanced in your studies, Walter. What do you think is the matter with the little fellow?"

## The Iron Hand.

"Oh, it's one of those cases where there seems to be a general derangement of the system; where the parents are healthy enough, but the child is weak and sickly. I don't think that he is very long for this land."

"Poor little fellow, it seems as though there ought to be something that would help him. It seems to me almost as though he had saved my life, and I wish I could do something for him. Do you suppose he suffers much, Walter—do you suppose he has much pain?"

"Oh, he must. I don't suppose he knows what it is to be free from pain."

"The poor baby," said Nellie, her eyes filling with tears; "he must be a brave little fellow."

"There are places where they help such cases as his, but they are so far away and it costs so much to go there and be treated that I am afraid the little fellow can't have the benefit."

Nellie did not answer this, but lay there thinking. That afternoon as her father sat by her bedside she asked him if he had ever seen the little boy who had heard her cry. He said he had; that he was a poor, sick little fellow, and was a great care to his parents.

"Do you know, pa, that he saved my life by hearing me moan down there in that dark hole?"



"How much am I worth Pa?"



## Nellie Fascinates Mr. Toump.

Ugh! it makes me shiver to think of it; and if there is anything we can do to try to save his life, don't you think we ought to do it?"

"Yes, my daughter," said Mr. Jimmy, looking into her tearful eyes—"yes, I do, Nellie, but the only way is to send him abroad, and it would cost so much money to do that."

Nellie did not answer for a minute, but then, reaching out and taking her father's hand in hers, she said:

"How much am I worth, pa?"

"How much are you worth, Nellie? You don't suppose I compare you with any amount of money, do you?"

"No; but don't you think my life being saved is worth the cost of trying to save this poor baby's life?"

"You shall have your own way, Nellie. I will see what can be done."

There was another visitor who came to the hospital to inquire for the invalid. When he came the first time he said he did not wish to see her, as he was not acquainted with her, but he had helped convey her out of the place where she was injured and he had felt an interest in her since. "My!" he said, with a strong foreign accent, to the attendant, "she have the finest

## The Iron Hand.

form I ever see. And her hair and eyes and everythings, they so beautiful, so fine, so fine. I could not keep my eyes away from her. Is she in there? Can I see her from here? Oh, but she have such beautiful little feet and ankles!"

"If she wants to see you you can go in," said the attendant, in a tone of disgust, "and if she don't you can stay out and," turning away from him, "be damned."

"If she was only mine!" said the little man to himself. "If she was only mine; but her father he reich, and I have not much moneys, so I cannot hope for that. If I could only get reich, though, then I might get her. Oh, that beautiful form, I cannot forget it, no, never! I must try think how I can get reich quick. Why, how are you, Mr. Nicols?" he exclaimed as Walter came up just as he was leaving the hospital.

"Have you some friend in there whom you have been to see?" asked Walter.

"Why, the beautiful young lady, Mr. Nicols, the beautiful young lady with the nice form!"

Walter looked at him much as a lion would look at a wolf.

"Did you see her?" he said.

"No. I not acquainted, so did not see her. I

## Nellie Fascinates Mr. Toump.

ask for her. Will you go in and introduce? Will you?"

"No," said Walter, after a pause; "no, I'm in a hurry now. I can't."

"Wait; I walk with you," he said as Walter started away. They walked down the street together, Walter not feeling very cordially toward him, but he did not appear to notice it. "Will you go in have glass of beer?" said the foreigner as they were passing a concert hall. Walter had no objection and they seated themselves at one of the tables and listened to the music. "You study to be physician, doctor—what you call it? Is zat so, Mr. Nicols?"

"Yes, I am nearly through my course now and will soon be able to write M. D. after my name. It might as well stand for mule driver as anything else, though, for all the good it'll do me, I expect."

"Why, you can go some new country, and be doctor and have lots patients."

"Yes, but in a new country there doesn't anybody get sick; and then I don't want to leave here, anyway."

"Ah, you got girl here—lady friend. Ah, I see, I see. You get over that by and by. Your father reich, is he not?"

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"So they tell me."

"Let's you and me start big store; great, magnificent store, big as dozen stores there are here. We sell cheap and get reich quick. What you say?"

"Have you ever been in business?" asked Walter.

"No. What that matter? Buy lots goods, sell 'em cheap. What difference whether you been in the business or not? Have big store, advertise in the papers, sell all kinds goods ver' cheap. What more do you want? You get some money from your father so we make a show, then I get all the money I want from Europe."

"How much money do you want to start with?" said Walter, thoughts of a fine, great store floating through his head. "It's pretty hard to get anything out of the governor, but he's just made a big pile in wheat and maybe he'd set me up in business if I asked him to. He's terribly anxious that I shall be a doctor, though."

"Well, you can doctor your own people. You'll have lots of them work for you. Plump, pretty girls, lots of 'em. You don't know how fine it is to have such a store."

"Well, you see what you can do," said Walter, "and we'll talk it over again some time. I won-

## Nellie Fascinates Mr. Toump.

der who this fellow is?" he said to himself as he walked away. "It may be that there's lots of money in what he says. It would be a great thing for me if I could make a pile and be able to go abroad. I'd want Nellie to go with me, though. She might be willing to marry me if I were rich. She was pretty badly hurt when she went to the hospital. I wonder how she came to be down in that dirty place there in the condition she was? I believe I'll go down there and see if I can find out anything." He went toward the place where Nellie was found, descended the stairs and came to the room where the girls had watched the ceremonies. In looking around he found where the tiles were removed. He paused and looked through the opening. "Great Scott!" he said; "the girls were watching us. There must have been more than one, because Nellie would never have had courage in the world to come here alone. I wonder what they were here for, anyway? To pay us up for some of the pranks we've played on them, I expect. Jewhilkilkins! though, what'll the fellows say when I tell them what's happened? I don't wonder Nellie was frightened," he said, laughing. "We were scared, too, and quit right there; but we didn't know what was the matter. I don't know as I

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had better say anything to the boys about it; it won't do any good and it might do some harm to the girls. No, I guess I'll keep it to myself for awhile, anyway." Ascending the stairs he walked out upon the street, not noticing his foreign friend, who had followed him unobserved and was waiting in a doorway for him to come up.

"I wonder what he go down there for?" he said, after Walter had walked away. "I think I go down and see. I little afraid, but I like to see what my fine young friend have down there. Maybe some ladies down there! Ha! I go down and see for myself." Walking around the building he saw over the door of a basement stairway a sign in Greek characters. "Ah," he said, "a college society. I wonder if it is safe for me to go down the back way?" He walked around to where Walter had emerged and stood looking down the stairway. After standing there awhile he slowly began descending and reached the bottom without anything happening. He thought he heard a rustle of some kind in going down, but it was only an instant, and it did not frighten him. Upon reaching the bottom he, too, discovered the opening in the wall. "What mystery is this?" he said. "College society meet in there;

## Nellie Fascinates Mr. Toump.

girl found with a broken leg there. What this mean? Ah, these dreadful secret societies! They may murder people down here. What! maybe I made great discovery. I go tell police. I—— Mein Gott en himmel!" he said faintly, turning round, "I go right away quick; I not tell anything. I go right back to Europe next steamer. Mein Gott! Mein Gott! I never thought I would get to dees place."

What had caused his fright was a huge form of a demon who stood before him and was making fierce gestures at him with his long arms.

# The Iron Hand.

## CHAPTER IV.

### PROSPEROUS TIMES.

WALTER had written to his father, who was a banker, about the proposition of his foreign friend, and his father, who was anxious to do something for the future prospects of his son, had answered him that he would come to the city, see what the prospects were, and if favorable he might furnish the money, as he had made a good deal lately. The young man looked forward to his coming with a great deal of expectancy, and after his arrival, as soon as he was rested, he broached his plan to him.

"The best way, my boy, to tell whether your scheme will work will be for us to take a trip around the city and look over the lay of the land, and inquire into the financial standing of the city corporations and other institutions. If it's a fine day to-morrow we might take a drive around. In the meanwhile, if you have a good

## Prosperous Times.

theater, let's go to that. You know I am passionately fond of a good play, and one thing that shows the condition of the people as much as anything else is the looks of the audience."

Shortly before the time for the curtain to rise Walter and his father were seated in good seats, where they could have a view of the audience. The theater was handsome, one of the finest in the land. Its gilded walls and cornices, lighted with hundreds of lights, its large audience, well dressed and expectantly waiting, had a very gratifying effect upon the father.

"One of the very best signs of prosperity, Walter—a large audience, made up of people well dressed and comfortable. So far so good. If everything looks as well as this, my boy, I shall think favorably of your idea. Who is that over there—that handsome girl who came in a few minutes ago? She has looked this way nearly ever since she came in. She is pale, as though she had been sick, but she has a fine face."

"Why, that's Nellie Jimmy," said Walter, quickly. "I didn't notice her when she came in." They bowed and smiled toward each other. The father smiled. "Some one you know well, eh, Walter?"

"She's the girl who's studying medicine, father

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—the one who had her leg broken. I wrote you about it.”

“Oh, the one you helped rescue; yes, I remember. You never told me why she was down there, though.”

“It was a funny scrape for a girl to get into, that’s a fact,” said Walter, “but I’ve never talked with her about it.”

Walter went around between the acts to congratulate Nellie upon her recovery, and was asked to call with his father. “I’ll have a confession to make to you, Walter, and I want to make it right away, so come soon, won’t you?”

The next day Walter and his father visited the police court and the county auditor’s office.

“Another good sign, Walter. I see your police judge has little to do for a city of this size. The people must be contented and happy and have money enough to live comfortably upon. I think,” he told the boy after visiting the auditor’s office and getting a statement of the city’s finances, “that you are pretty badly in debt here. It will require very prosperous times and good management for the city to keep its head above water with such a load. It may, though. We will look into it further before deciding.”

That evening they called upon Mr. Jimmy and

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Nellie. The young people seemed to be rather quiet as their fathers talked, which Mr. Jimmy noticed, and inviting Mr. Nicol to another room, left them to themselves.

"They're used to visiting without third parties," laughingly said Mr. Nicol as they left the room together.

"Yes," said Mr. Jimmy. "We were young ourselves once and know how it is."

"They seem to be pretty good friends," said Mr. Nicol, with a smile. "Your daughter is very fine-looking, Mr. Jimmy."

"Yes, they do seem quite fond of each other's company. Nellie is a nice girl and you have a fine, manly fellow in Walter, Mr. Nicol."

They looked at each other in a gratified sort of manner, and both felt more like friends after the conversation.

The fathers out of the way, Walter and Nellie were soon talkative enough. "I told you I had a confession to make, Walter," Nellie said, looking up out of her laughing eyes into his. "I don't know how I ever had courage to do what I did, but I went down there that night to try and scare you boys for the pranks you've played upon us."

"You weren't there alone, were you, Nellie? There must have been some one else there, too."

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"Yes," answered Nellie, quickly, "the other girls were there with me."

"Oh! you were all there, were you? How was it you were the only one hurt?"

"Oh, the other girls were so frightened when I screamed that they didn't wait for me. I was looking in when it—say, Walter," she said earnestly, "were you going to cut his head off?"

Walter burst into a roar of laughter which disconcerted Nellie immensely. "I can't tell the secrets of our society," he said, "but I'm glad you didn't see any more. It's a good thing it ended where it did, but it came pretty nearly ending seriously for you, Nellie," he said, soberly.

"Yes, it did. If it hadn't been for you I might have died." She didn't look up, but toyed with one of the fringes upon her dress as Walter leaned over toward her.

"It would have been dreadful, Nellie, dreadful to me if you had"—his voice choked—"if you had died." She looked up tenderly into his eyes.

"I'm so glad I lived, Walter," she said tremblingly. Walter leaned over further; his face was close to Nellie's. He moved one of his feet too far forward, lost his balance and measured his length upon the floor, quickly.

When the two fathers appeared, attracted by

## Prosperous Times.

the noise, Walter and Nellie were standing, laughing somewhat sheepishly at them.

"What's the matter?" said Mr. Jimmy, looking at the overturned chair. "Did one of you tip over backward?"

"What a question, pa!" said Nellie, turning red.

"Well, I guess it's nothing very serious," said Mr. Jimmy as they went back to their easy-chairs. "As I was saying, Mr. Nicol, our banks are full of small deposits. Our savings banks show large deposits. We haven't had a bank failure here for years. Our times are good and our city is growing every day. Yes, our debt is large; there is no denying that; a little topheavy, perhaps, but we are a young city and growing so fast that I do not think it will give us any trouble. I will take you to-morrow to see our city, the public works we have built, and I think you will agree with me that the money has been well spent."

As Mr. Nicol and Walter were walking home, after spending a pleasant evening, as they both assured Mr. Jimmy and Nellie, Mr. Nicol told Walter that the city seemed to him to be at the height of prosperity. "You say this man who wishes to go in with you is a foreigner and can

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secure capital in Europe. I would like to see and talk with him. When can you introduce us?"

"I haven't seen him for several days. I think he must be sick. I will go and hunt him up tomorrow while you and Mr. Jimmy are making your tour of inspection," said Walter.

The next day, as soon as he was at liberty, Walter went to Mr. Toump's room. He knocked upon the door, but received no answer. After repeating his knocking several times a small boy appeared upon the scene and informed him "Dat dat man was in dere an' people t'ought he was dead."

"Let me in, Mr. Toump," called Walter through the keyhole. "Let me in. I want to speak to you." There was a rustling inside, and the door being opened disclosed Mr. Toump, who had evidently just arisen. "You keep yourself pretty close, don't you?" said Walter. "I haven't seen you for several days."

"Yes. I had terrible experience. I see the devil and I lock myself up here against him."

"You saw the devil! I'd like to see him and find out what he looks like."

"You must have seen him, too. I believe I have to tell you where. I don't want to, though. You know one day, two, three, four days ago you

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go down that place where we find the beautiful young lady? I go down, too, after you come up, and oh, mein Gott! I see him."

Walter had looked at him disgustedly as he spoke until he saw his fright, when he burst into a laugh and asked the foreigner if he was handsome.

"Oh, you no ask me," he said, holding up both hands. "The worst-looking, the horribuldest-looking thing I ever saw! Oh, *merci!* he dreadful."

"I think I have seen him a great many times," said Walter, convinced that some of the students had played a trick upon the superstitious man. He's a harmless imp, although he is pretty bad-looking. He's a good friend of mine and won't hurt you. You need have no fear of him."

"I got charm here to keep away devil, but it no good. I sell it for five cents now."

"Here I'll give you one that'll keep him away, unless you go down there again. If you do, I cannot answer for the consequences." He handed him a round stone he had picked up once upon the mountains and carried ever since.

"Thank you, thank you. I feel the fear of him gone as I touch it. If he come at me now I show

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him this and I guess he scoot, scoot, scoot. I guess that right, hey?"

"Yes, that's the word. He'll scoot fast enough if you ever see him and show him that, I'll warrant you. My father is here and wishes to see you in regard to starting the big store. Can you come this afternoon?"

"Yes, I come, sure. Does he like the looks of the city?"

"Yes, I think he does," said Walter. "He seems very favorably impressed so far."

"Oh, I hope he will, then. We make pile moneys and go Europe togeder."

# Michael Hooley.

## CHAPTER V.

### MICHAEL HOOLEY AND THE GOAT.

MR. JIMMY and Mr. Nicol started out for a tour about the city to see, as Mr. Jimmy said, how prosperous it was and how easily it could carry its debt. "I want to start early," said Mr. Jimmy, "so we can see the city before the dew gets off, as I may say. We will take a lunch in the morning before we start and see the streets when they are fresh."

They had arisen early, and just as the sun was peeping over the horizon they started out. The pure, sweet morning air seemed to invigorate them, and as they looked from an eminence where they had driven the warm rays of the sun shone upon a city asleep. The trees waved in the gentle breeze and the odor of flowers somewhere below them floated out upon the morning air and filled their nostrils with incomparable sweetness. Driving down upon the well-paved streets, between the rows of prosperous-looking stores and

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shops, they were home again for an early dinner.

"You certainly have a wonderfully prosperous city," said Mr. Nicol. "I have seen no very palatial residences, yet a greater amount of general prosperity and comfort I have never run across."

Mr. Jimmy was proud of the city. He had lived and worked in it, boy and man, for many years, and its welfare was dear to him. "Yes," he said, "we all work for the welfare of our town. With the increase of our business interests we seek to set our city in the foremost rank, and I think we have succeeded pretty well, so far."

"You have, indeed. I have so far failed to see any evidences of great wealth, but a more contented people I have never seen. Your factories and workshops seem to be busy, and, take it all together, you have a very flattering prospect before you."

"Our debt is large, there is no denying that, but if we can have good times for a few years I think we will be glad we have spent the money for our public works, for we think we have been justified in building them well."

"Time will tell," said Mr. Nicol, "and I have no doubt but that you will have a great and glorious city here, if not for you, for your posterity."

That evening Mr. Nicol met the foreign friend

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of his son's. He did not like him, he told his son, but he thought he might be able to make money. "I believe there is a great chance here for the kind of business you speak of, and if this man is the proper person, I think a great deal of money can be made. I will furnish the money. I have made a great deal of it lately in the rise of provisions. Some say it is blood money, made from the price of what people eat; but I have the money, anyway, and am willing to use it for this."

The next day the papers were made out and the partnership entered into, Mr. Toump agreeing to furnish an equal amount of money, to be secured from Europe.

"Faith an' there's goin' to be the biggest store downtown ye could see in a long while," said Mike to his wife one morning not long after. "I wish I could git the haulin' for it, but they say it's goin' to be let by contract, an' the one that gits it will have to have money to buy fine teams, an'll have to do it awful cheap, so I guess I won't try to git it. I'll be after goin' now, so good-by, my little gossoon. Mr. Jimmy says he's goin' to send ye to Europe to git well. I don't know how we can let you go, my little boy, but we'll have to. Good-by," and he was soon out of sight, waving his hand as long as he could see the little

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white face. "It'll be hard to have the little boy go, but if he don't we'll have to bid good-by for good before long. Ah, well, we must make the best of it. Go 'long, Susan—go 'long, old girl, go 'long."

"I'm a Connemara if there ain't Pat Flaherty's goat," said he as he was driving along the street, after reaching the busy parts of the city. "I wonder how the spalpeen came down here. He must have smelled a barrel of old tin cans or somethin', or he wouldn't have come. I believe I'll have to ketch him an' tie him up, so's he won't git away, or Pat'll never forgive me if he hears I saw him runnin' an' didn't try to ketch him. He's a fine, strong animal, he is, an' it would be too bad to let him git lost." He stopped his horse and looked at the animal browsing along the curb, with a lot of urchins throwing stones at him from a safe distance. He would stop smelling along and occasionally shake his head, but that was all. "I ought to ketch him," said Mike. "He's an all-fired ugly brute to strangers, but he knows me pretty well an' I don't belave he'd want to hurt me." He dropped his lines and, slowly climbing down from his dray, began approaching the animal cautiously. "Come, Billy, come, Billy," he said in most seduc-

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tive tones, holding out his hand to him. Billy didn't pay any attention to him, but kept on sniffing along the street. "Come, Billy. Ye know old Mike as well as ye know yer own bed. Come on. Yer father, Pat Flaherty, 'll cry his eyes out if ye don't go home." Quite a crowd had gathered by this time, including a couple of policemen, and were enjoying the situation immensely. Mike had approached very near the goat by this time, who had stopped sniffing and stood with head down looking at him. "Come to yer Uncle Mike Hooley, Billy," he said, coaxingly, as he reached for his chain, which was dragging loosely on the ground. "Come, Billy, that's a good boy." As he reached for the chain the goat rose upon his hind legs and began pawing the air with his fore feet. "Ah, is that what ye want?" said Mike. "Is it a scrap ye want? Well, I've a good mind to have a crack or two at ye, ye four-legged beggar." He squared himself off as though for a fight, which pleased the audience immensely. "Come on, come on," said he, dancing about. The goat paused a minute, and then dropping upon all fours, made for him before he could think. He struck him just below the knees, which toppled him over directly upon the goat's back. Catching his foot in one of the

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animal's horns, he lay helpless. The goat and man began tearing around in a circle, Mike using his one free leg and his hands to help support himself. "For the love of mercy separate us, somebody, or this varmint will be the death of me!" cried he. "Separate us, somebody! Here, you cop, pull us apart!" As they kept going the crowd nearly died with laughter. As they came near one of the policemen he raised his club and aimed a blow at the goat's head, but, bad luck for Mike, it struck him upon the place he usually used for sitting upon. "Ow, ye big baboon! Ye better go back to the ould country an' practice with yer shillalah before ye be a policeman in this free country! Help! Murther! Can't somebody separate us?" Mike cried as the goat began to run. Such a roar of laughter was never heard upon the street before. But Mike had freed himself now and lay upon the ground while the goat stood looking on. The policeman who had struck him came up to help him, but he arose alone and started for his dray.

"Are ye hurted?" asked the policeman.

"Am I hurted? That's a foine question to ask a man after hittin' him with a cordwood stick like ye did! Go along, ye Connemara, an' not talk to a decent gentleman."





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The policeman had forgotten the goat, who charged and upset him just as Mike finished his speech. It was Mike's turn to laugh now and the policeman's to swear. But Mike had had enough of the goat, and as he saw him getting ready for another charge he turned and ran for his dray. He climbed upon it just as the goat went underneath. Climbing upon the seat, he turned and shook his fist angrily at him. "The devil take ye, an' Pat Flaherty, too! Ye can run as far as ye like for all of me," he said as he drove away and left the goat and policeman to have it out.

He drove down to his work, and in passing along one of the principal streets he came to a row of stores. Three of these upon one end of the row were being remodeled and changed. The workmen were busy and the noise of hammering and sawing would make any one think an improvement was being made. Mike stopped in passing and looked on, as did some idlers. Mr. Jimmy's store was in the same row, and he had walked up to see what was being done.

"Good-morning, sir," said Mike. "They're goin' to have a big one, ain't they?"

"Yes. It'll be a great attraction for a short

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time, no doubt. I'm afraid it'll turn our trade some, but I don't know."

"I know it'll hurt mine, because one of my customers used to have a store there where they're workin', an' he's gone out of business now."

"Yes, I understand the big store offered better rent, more than the other man could afford to pay, and as the lease was up they had to move out. The rest of the leases are up before long; maybe they'll have the whole row then."

It was the new department store. The monster had begun his work.

# Food for the Monster.

## CHAPTER VI.

### FOOD FOR THE MONSTER.

"I SUPPOSE you have heard of my new venture, Nellie?" said Walter Nicol one evening, upon one of his calls. "The big new store we are going to start, Mr. Toump and myself? We are going to be down there near your father's."

"Yes, I have heard of it," said Nellie. "I guess 'most every one has. Do you think it's just right, the way you treated those men who had stores there before, Walter?"

"You mean in driving them out? Oh, business is business, you know. I'll tell you honestly, though, Nellie, that I objected to it. I wanted to go somewhere else, but Mr. Toump laughed at me. Money is money, he said to me, in answer to my suggestion. They'd do the same to you if they had a chance."

"I think it worries papa," said Nellie. "He says you will be wanting his store and all the rest before long."

"No, Nellie," said Walter, quickly, "we'll do

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nothing of the kind. Your father isn't angry with me, is he?" he said, ruefully.

"No. He says he's a business man and it's all business-like, but I can see that it worries him a good deal."

"It'll make me wish I hadn't gone into it if it gives your father any anxiety, Nellie, for I know if he has any trouble it will make you feel badly, too." He said this soberly and earnestly, and Nellie looked up at him gratefully in reply. What a beautiful girl Nellie was! Walter wished he could tell her what he hoped to sometime, but it was not the right time now. He would wait.

"I would like to go with Mr. Toump when he goes back to the old country," said Walter. "I always wanted to take a trip across the ocean. Maybe I can some time. I must stay here and see to things, though, while he is gone."

Nellie looked up at him again and suddenly clasped her hands. "Do you suppose he'd take little Jack over there with him?" she said, her eyes shining with sudden animation.

"I think he would if he saw you now and heard you ask," said Walter, smiling and showing his admiration of the beautiful face before him.

## Food for the Monster.

"Do you suppose he will? Poor little Jack! If he can only find some one who will take him and care for him I will be so happy."

"And who is little Jack?"

"Why, the little fellow who heard me moan that dreadful night—you know when I mean," she said with a shudder.

"Yes, I remember; the night when you were going to find out all our secrets. That was a terrible thing for you, wasn't it? It was dreadful."

"Well, we have all felt so grateful for what that poor, sick little fellow did for me that pa is going to pay his expenses to go abroad for treatment, and if Mr. Toump will take charge of him it will be so nice."

"I have no doubt but what he will, and I will speak to him about it the first chance I have."

A few days after this found Nellie, one bright morning in June, when the air was full of gladness and the scent of flowers, at the door of the house where little Jack's parents lived—a long, one-story building made of boards, neatly covered with a coat of whitewash, literally buried in a mass of green and flowers. Its doors and windows were protected from the flies and other insects by screens, and over its sides and roof,

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and even upon the chimney itself, the green vine climbed. Two little curly heads appeared at the door as Nellie let the gate click.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Hooley," Nellie said as a stout woman, with sleeves rolled up, appeared.

"Why, if it ain't Miss Jimmy! Come right in, miss. Shure, an' I'm glad to see ye. An' how purty ye do look now."

"Oh, you mustn't flatter me, Mrs. Hooley," said Nellie, laughing.

"Sure an' it's not flattery at all, but the honest truth. Pat, you go an' wash yer face now, or I'll murther ye, I will. I have to speak sharp to 'em," she said, turning to Nellie after speaking as she did to a young urchin who was looking in from one side of a doorway. "I have to speak sharp to 'em, all but little Jack. He's a good little fellow an' don't give me no trouble."

"How is little Jack? I came down to ask you about him."

"Oh, he's much the same. He's a poor, sick little fellow, an' so patient."

"Is he where I can see him?"

"Oh, yes. Here, you, Jim, go an' bring your little lame brother for the lady to see."

They appeared very soon, shouting and hallooing, little Jack perched upon his brother's back.

## Food for the Monster.

"Here, Jacky, the lady wants to see you. Get down, now, an' let her see how big you are."

His brother sat him down upon the floor and was away as fast as he could go.

"Come and see me, little Jack," said Nellie. "I have something I wish to ask you."

The little fellow went up to her, when she left her chair and stooped down by him. "Would you like to go away off across the sea," she said to him, "where the doctors would make you well, so you could run and hop and jump like your brothers do?"

The little, thin face looked her steadily in the eyes and then turned to his mother and said: "Do you want me to go, mamma?"

"Bless his little heart," said the mother going up to him and putting her arm around him and his cheek against hers—"bless his little heart, it would be awful hard to let him go, but if he could come home strong an' healthy, how fine it would be."

The little face was thoughtful for a minute. "Could I climb up in my high-chair all alone like Davy, then, mamma?"

"Yes, my little boy, you would be well an' strong then, please God."

The little fellow left his mother and went over

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to Nellie and placed one little, thin hand in one of hers.

"Oh, we are not going now, Jacky. I came to ask your mamma if you could go. There is a gentleman going who says he will take you if you can, and now I shall tell him that you can. He'll come and get you in a few days, and then little Jack will go away and come back a big, strong boy."

The little fellow withdrew his hand and, sitting down in his little chair, leaned his head upon one arm.

The tears came into Nellie's eyes as she rose to go. "Good-by, little Jacky," she said.

"Dood-by, lady," came the answer.

"He's just like an old man," said the mother, wistfully. "If he can only be cured—oh, if he only can!"

It was perhaps six months after this that Nellie began to go down to the store quite regularly to walk home with her father. Little Jack had gone several weeks before—gone with Mr. Toump, who had promised to see him properly cared for across the sea, and Nellie thought that that duty was done. She had another care now, though. Her father, who had always been so contented and happy, was changing. He was

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becoming careworn. She could see that there was something bearing heavily upon him. She loved him. He had always been so kind to her, and indulgent, and now, when he seemed to have trouble, it felt to her as if she helped him bear it by walking by his side after the day's business was over. Before going into her father's store she walked down to the new big store to look in the windows and see the fine display made there. The windows were indeed beautiful. While she stood there Walter came out of the door. He was very glad to see her, evidently, and turning they walked back toward her father's place of business.

"I came down to walk home with papa. He seems to be so worried lately, and likes to have me," she said to him.

As Nellie and her father came out and started down the street Walter overtook them and walked along at Nellie's side. He also noticed the careworn look on Mr. Jimmy's face, and that, although he tried to be sociable toward him, there was a constrained feeling that he could not help.

"Dear papa, what is the matter?" Nellie said to him after they had gone into the house. He had sat down in a large easy-chair and leaned

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his head upon his hand. She went up to him and placed her arms around his neck. "There is something dreadful worrying you. Please tell me what it is."

Her father thought for a few minutes. "I might as well tell you, Nellie," he said, slowly. "You will have to know it soon, anyway, and I will tell you now. My health is failing fast, my daughter. I have for many years been disposed to a malady which needed only some great provocation to develop it. The provocation has come; my business is becoming ruined, and it is going to take me with it." He paused.

"What is the matter, papa? What is the cause of it? Can nothing be done?"

"No, my child," he said, looking into the beautiful face turned wistfully up to his, "I cannot see any way. There is no use in going into particulars, as I know of."

"Who is the cause of it? Is there any one in particular, papa, who has done it?"

"The young man who walked home with us, Nellie, he is the cause of it." The face looking up into his turned ashy white, but she did not say a word. "The big store, Nellie," is ruining my business. My lease I cannot get rid of, and then I hate to have the business go down. It

## Food for the Monster.

has been there for so many years, and the people who work for me have been there so long, and it is their means of support."

"You have enough, anyway, papa. Do not worry about it. You will be able to get through it all right."

"I am afraid, my girl, that I will not. I cannot explain it to you now, but I am afraid not. And then those who have worked for me so long—I feel dreadfully to have them thrown out, too."

# The Iron Hand.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE CURSE.

A FEW weeks later and we see Nellie Jimmy in charge of her father's store. She has left school, her chosen profession and everything, to conduct the business. Her father's health has failed rapidly. The doctors think that, free from business cares, he may recuperate, but he has become a feeble old man in a few months. Nellie is carrying on the business, and she sees it diminishing day by day. "If this keeps on," she says to herself, "I will have to close up altogether." She sees customers that have traded with her father for years, that she knows of, dropping off, and when she watches them go by and notices where they go, sees them go a little further down the street and go in at the doors of the big store. She tries in every way she can, together with the help of the old clerks, who realize that their places depend upon keeping up the business, to stem the tide. They make

## The Curse.

the store as attractive as they can; they reduce the prices as low as they can and conduct their business honestly; but it is of no use.

Mr. Toump has returned from Europe now, and the rumor is that he has secured large capital there. At any rate, arrangements are made for the enlargement of the store. The papers are full of accounts of it; great, flaring advertisements begin appearing in them; the smaller merchants gasp to read them, and realize that such advertising would bankrupt them in a short time.

Since the night her father had told her that Walter was the cause of the ruin of his business and also of his health, Nellie had avoided him. She had learned to love him, and the words of her father had sunk deep into her heart. It did not seem to her as though the manly young fellow could do anything knowingly to injure her father, but she had tried to keep out of his way.

"Nellie," he said to her one day as he overtook her upon the street, "will you take a ride with me this evening, after business is over? I have been wanting to ask you, but have not been able to see you before."

Nellie hesitated. She did not know what to say. He spoke so kindly that she could not think

## The Iron Hand.

he knew he was harming any one. "Nellie," he said, kindly and earnestly, as she looked down at the ground, "you are vexed at me for something. Go with me to-night and tell me what it is."

"Yes, I will go, Walter," she said, looking up into his face. "I will go and tell you what you wish to know."

"I will be on hand," he said, gayly, as he left her. She did not answer, but quickly left him. He walked along soberly enough after leaving her. "I wonder what is the matter with Nellie," he said to himself, over and over. "I wonder what has come over her? She has always been so pleasant toward me, and now she almost cuts me. I have had her picture in my mind for days. I believe my life would be a blank without her."

"What yer doin'? Ain't ye got no eyes in yer head that ye have to be runnin' into people like that?" said a voice, half angry and half comical.

"I beg your pardon. I was rather blundering along, that's a fact. I didn't hurt you any, did I?" he said to the man who stood looking at him, and whom he had bumped into and caused to fall over a barrel he was rolling.

"No, but it warn't no fault of your'n that ye

## The Curse.

didn't. Be careful next time ye come across an Irish gentleman, an' don't trate him that way."

"Why, you're the man who was there that day when we found Miss Jimmy down under the sidewalk!"

"Ye never said annything truer than that, my son," said Mike, for it was he whom Walter had run into. "A fine lady she is, too, an' a kind-hearted one. She's always good to Mike; indade she is."

"She's good to everybody, I guess. I know her very well."

"Ye do, do ye? Well, if you do, ye ought to go an' give that divil that has started that—what is it?—that compartment store, up yonder, a lickin' that he'll remimber for makin' the pretty lady so sad, an' all because he's ruined her father's business an' his health besides. Bad luck to him, an' it's meself he's hurt, too, by drivin' one o' my customers out o' business."

Walter stayed to hear no more, but walked away with rapid strides. "Is it possible," he said, "that I am the cause of this, if what the old Irishman says is true? I had always rather have lived a poor man than to have given Nellie any trouble." He walked the street for some time, but composed himself in time to call for her for

## The Iron Hand.

the ride he had invited her to take. He had a handsome span of horses, and as he drove up to the gate he thought to himself that any of the girls would be glad to ride behind them. Nellie came out to meet him with her handsome face bearing a look of anxiety. They made a fine-looking couple, seated side by side, and so more than one thought who saw them. Previously their rides had been taken in the gayest of spirits, but now Nellie was reserved and quiet.

"Nellie, tell me what it is," he said passionately. "I shall die if I have to live this way. What dreadful thing have I done that you treat me so? You know—you must know—that I love you, that I worship you; and when you treat me this way it nearly drives me crazy."

Nellie put her hands to her face and burst into tears. "Papa! poor papa!" she said. "His health is gone, his business is ruined, and you have done it, Walter; you and this man who is with you. I cannot believe that you have done it purposely, but it has all come about through your methods of doing business."

Walter did not answer for a little while, but looked intently at the horses' heads. "It may be, Nellie, that our store has driven your father out of business. Of course, from a business stand-

## The Curse.

point, that is not a crime. Every man has a right to sell what he pleases and for what price he pleases. I am very sorry for your father, Nellie, and although I cannot give up now what I have started, I only wish I could, if it would save you any trouble. But," he said, bending his head down close to hers, "I can do all I can to remedy the evil, and am going to ask you to let me. Dear Nellie," he said, placing his hand upon hers, "be my wife. Give up your endeavor to carry on your father's business and be my wife. I am making money rapidly now and will make enough for all of us, and your father shall have all he wants."

Nellie sat with her hands folded upon the lap robe, but did not answer.

"Nellie, please answer me. I love you better than my own life, and you will drive me to desperation if you treat me as you have."

"Walter," she said, looking him in the face out of her beautiful eyes, "I love you, too. I would be very happy with you, I know, if it were right for us to marry. We will see papa when we get back, and I will ask him."

The remainder of the evening passed pleasantly away, Nellie resuming her old-time way, and as they drove up to the house they both felt

## The Iron Hand.

as though they were made for each other, and that their lives would be empty without each other's presence.

"Good-evening, Ole," Nellie said to the huge form who usually came and took her father out for an airing every day. "Has father been out to take the air to-night?"

"No, miss," answered the Swede in his sing-song tone. "Mr. Yimmy not so well to-night. He taken sick when we walking this afternoon and I been with him since then." Nellie's gayety left her at once, and jumping from the carriage she rushed into the house.

"Her father very bad," said Ole to Walter. "He had very bad spell, he did." Walter hardly knew what to do in his awkward predicament, so sat and talked with Ole for some time.

"How is business down town at the store, Ole?" he asked him. "Is it good these days?"

"Naw, naw, there be no business. There be no business on the whole street no more. That big store down there he do all the business and nobody else get any. He ought to be hung, that man. I lose my place pretty quick, and all the rest they lose theirs, too; and Miss Nellie have to shut the store up, and what'll they do then? Mr. Yimmy be awful good man to work for.

## The Curse.

He kind and good to us and pay us good wages, but this other store, it hire lot leetle girls and children to work, and what we goin' to do?"

Walter could stand it no longer. Every one seemed to be against him, so, getting out of his buggy, he hitched his horse and started toward the door, leaving Ole without answering him. He rang the bell, but no one appearing he went gently in. In the parlor, sitting in an easy-chair, was Mr. Jimmy. His head was thrown back upon the top and he and Nellie were talking earnestly. "I will do the best I can, papa. The business is fairly good now, and after people find out the truth of the matter I think they will come back to us, don't you?" Walter stood in the doorway and Nellie did not see him until after she had spoken.

"Here is Walter now, papa. He will tell you much as I have."

The father raised himself upright with sudden animation. "Where is he?" he said, loudly. "My curses on you, and may you rue the day you conspired to ruin me and others, too! My curses on you and on yours for what you have done! Nellie, I cannot see him. I cannot see you. I am blind! I am blind! blind! blind!"



# The Iron Hand.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE TEMPTATION.

ONE morning, soon after the events narrated in the previous chapter, while Nellie was walking about the store, there came in at the door a very stylishly dressed man of spare build, who smilingly addressed her. She knew him at once. She had seen him many times upon the street and in the new store.

"Good-morning, Mees Jimmy. It is a beautiful morning."

"Yes, sir," she answered, "it is very pleasant." She had stepped up in front of him and stood with her hands clasped.

"You have nice little store here. Is business good, Mees Jimmy?"

"It was before you came to ruin it," answered Nellie, bravely.

"Oh, Mees Jimmy, I ruin nobody. I simply servant of the people, that is all."

Nellie did not answer, but stood looking at the floor.

## The Temptation.

"I simply business man; I know nothing only business. I do all the business I can and I make all the money I can, same as any other man do."

"Have you no care for your neighbors' interests at all? Do you never follow the golden rule to do unto others as you would be done by?"

"Oh, now, my nice young lady, there is no golden rule in business. It is every one for his own self." Nellie did not answer. "Now, Mees Jimmy, you don't know me, but I know you. I helped carry you out of that place where you were that dreadful night, and, mein Gott! the place where I see the devil, too." Nellie looked up at him quickly. "Yes, I see him. Ugh! it makes me shudder, he such a horrible-looking thing. What could you be down there for, now, I wonder? That bad place down there." He stopped and leered at her.

"I went down to see the devil, of course," answered Nellie, disgustedly.

"You! You went down to see the devil!" said the little man, holding up his hands. "You go down to see the devil?"

"Yes, I did, and I wish he was here now," answered Nellie.

"Well, I don't believe he come, anyway. But

## The Iron Hand.

what you going to do here, Mees Jimmy? You going carry on the business? If you would like good position I think I could get it for you."

"I don't know what I shall do—whether I shall try to keep up the business or not."

"You better take good position, Mees Jimmy. You have regular pay then and no bother 'bout things. You know you have to give up this store before long, and then you have lease to pay just the same. Supposing I offer you place in my store. What you say?" Nellie looked at him in astonishment. She could say nothing for a minute. "Come, Mees Jimmy, you so beautiful, you look so nice in my store. I pay you big salary to come work for me."

Nellie's eyes flashed, and, stamping her foot upon the ground, she said to him, her voice quivering with anger: "How dare you come and offer me a place in your store and insult me, too? Who has ruined my father and made him an invalid but you? Who has driven his faithful clerks away and caused them to seek employment elsewhere when they ought to be doing well here? Who has monopolized the business of the whole street by driving honest men out, by misrepresenting goods and inducing people to buy worthless stuff? You have done it, and then ask

## The Temptation.

me to work for you! I would die before I would do it!"

Mr. Toump had stood quietly with his head bent, as though breasting a storm. After she had finished he waited a minute, as though expecting she would commence again. Looking up then, with a smile upon his face, he said: "You are angry, Mees Jimmy, and you accuse me wrongfully. I no more blame than Mr. Nicol, who one of your friends!" Had Nellie seen his eyebrows raise when he spoke she would have been doubly angry, but she stood, after her passionate outburst, looking at the floor.

"Why do you come and talk to me in this way?" she said, raising her face. "Do you think I would have anything to do with you after seeing what I have?"

"But, Mees Jimmy, you forget. You look very handsome when you angry, but you must do something. Your business all leave you here. You cannot keep the store—you have to do something. I give you good place, good salary—better salary than anybody else get. I will not say more now; if you want to have it you can let me know." He bowed politely and left her.

"Dat man he rascal, Miss Yimmy. Don't you have noding to do wid him," said a deep, gruff

## The Iron Hand.

voice, and Ole stood in front of her, swinging his huge arms excitedly. "I hear all he say. He say he pay you big salary to work for him. What he call big salary? What Mr. Yimmy pay his clerks? He pay dem good wages, so dey have chance to live happy. What dis man pay his clerks? Three, four dollars week; dat what he calls good salary. Course he sell goods cheap when he pay such wages as dat."

*"Oh, Johnny, says she, I'd like to see the world go round again.*

*Oh, Johnny, says she, I'd like to see the world go round again."*

As the refrain burst upon their ears they both smiled; they could not help it.

"Mike, he queer fellow," said Ole. "He always good-natured and happy all time."

"Hello, Swedey," said Mike; "an' how's all the Swades an' Danes an' Norwagians an'——"

"Hold on, you," said Ole. "What you mean by askin' me 'bout Norwegian? I no Norwegian. I know noding 'bout Norwegian."

"Well, the King of Norway, he's the King o' Sweden, too, be gobs," said Mike.

## The Temptation.

"No, you liar. The King of Sweden he be the King of Norway—ha! ha! ha! I got you there, Mr. Irishman, anyhow."

"Faith an' I don't care whether ye have or not, it's all the same, anyway. An' how's the father, Miss Nellie—how's he gettin' on these days? I haven't seen him for a long time now."

"Oh, he's very poorly, Mr. Hooley. He's become totally blind and can't see anything."

"No! You don't tell me! Poor man! and he was always so good to me, an' everybody, too." Nellie sat looking at the ground.

"He good man to Ole, too. I take dat little man dat ruin his business by de collar and dip him in the river just as soon as not."

"An' I'd lave him to drown, the son of a thatcher, if I dipped him, be gorra," said Mike. "What's goin' to become of the town anyway? Here's stores closin' up every day an' this store gittin' bigger every day. He'll have it all pretty soon, an' then what'll the rest of us do? He's beat me out of two customers already, an' that's a good dale for an Irishman like Mike, with a family to support. Bad luck to him. I hope his old store'll burn up some time."

"He beat me out o' yob, too. I been here long while, but Miss Yimmy can't keep the business

## The Iron Hand.

up, so there's noting for me to do but quit. Miss Yimmy she very kind to Ole; and wat you tink, Mike? Dat man what keeps the new store and who hurt us all was here to-night tryin' to get Miss Yimmy to go work for him."

"Work for him? It ain't work he wants of her, the blaggard. Don't you have nothin' to do with him, Miss Nellie. Don't you do it—will you?"

"I don't know what I shall do, Mr. Hooley, I really don't. I believe I shall have to give up the store. Business is so dull and I can't seem to make it any better."

"We'll look out for Miss Yimmy, Mike, won't we?" said Ole. "I can't earn much and you got big family, but we look out for Miss Yimmy."

"Indeed we will. She shall never want while old Mike's got a cent."

"I thank you both, gentlemen, for your kindness," said Nellie, feelingly. "I am in rather a hard place, and if I need assistance I will surely call on you." They bade her good-by and left.

"That old baste that's worried Miss Nellie so," said Mike as they went out. "I'd like to duck him in the pond, faith an' I would."

"He deserves worse'n duckin'," said Ole. "I

## The Temptation.

just soon bang him on the head with a hammer as not."

"What a swate thing she is, an' she calls me Mr. Hooley, too. Nobody but just Miss Jimmy ever calls me annything but Mike."

"Say, Mike, let's do something to this man. He own the whole town by and by, and then we be his slaves. He be king, like they have in old country, and everybody have to get out his way."

"What would ye want to do with him, now?"

"I don't care what I do with him. I yoost as soon drown him as anything."

"Oh, no, no, no, nothin' like that, unless we could scare him to death."

"You scare him to death, Mike, and then I'll kill him afterward. How that do?"

"An' how could ye kill him after I'd scared him to death, ye big dunce?"

"I no dunce," said Ole, excitedly. "I give you good lickin' you don't look out."

"Oh, don't git excited, Swedey, don't git excited. We mustn't do annything to git us into trouble, but if we could play some joke on the ould villain so't he'd lave the country, I'd be with ye."

"We can't do dat, we can't do dat—there's no

## The Iron Hand.

use tryin'. But I kill him 'fore he do any harm to Miss Yimmy, I will!"

"An' so will I. If after ye kill him he needs killin' again, I'll do it, too, be gobs, before he shall hurt Miss Nellie."

## Springing of the Trap.

### CHAPTER IX.

#### THE SPRINGING OF THE TRAP.

AFTER the men had left her Nellie sat for some time thinking. Her business had kept growing less and less until she saw that she might just as well close up the store. She had discharged all the help and attended to what little business remained herself. "Father is getting so nervous and worries so about the business," she said to herself, "I don't dare to tell him how it is; if I did, I don't know but what he would become insane. I must keep up appearances to him, I can see that. Poor pa! he has always been so good to me. I must try to keep his spirits up the best I can. What can this man mean by offering me employment? He pays very poor wages, and yet says he will pay me a good salary. Maybe if he would buy the stock of the store, and do that, it would be the best thing I could do. I don't know what's going to become of us at this rate, I'm sure I do not." As she sat there thinking, the figure of a manly young fellow came up be-

## The Iron Hand.

fore her mind. She dwelt upon it as she looked earnestly at the floor. "Walter," she whispered, "if you could only help me, but you are in league with this man, too, and have helped to cause our ruin."

Could Walter have known the thoughts passing through her mind, he would have been glad to have done anything to ease the anguish she was suffering.

"Well, Nellie," her father said to her that night after she had gone home, "how has business been to-day? Is there any sign of improvement, or has the new store crushed everything?"

"Oh, business has been pretty good, pa," said Nellie as cheerfully as she could. "I have let all the help go, and so do pretty well by myself."

"Oh, that cursed pair—that foreigner and Walter Nicol," said Mr. Jimmy in a frenzy. "Oh, I believe I could throttle either one of them could I get my hands upon them. My own and my associates' stores, that have done business for so many years, to be wiped out by this iron-handed monster, this great department store. I am a poor man to-day, and helpless, where a year ago I was doing well and had good health. You villain! Could I get hold of you I'd make you squirm!"

## Springing of the Trap.

Nellie had looked at her father in wonder at first and in fear as he went on. She had never seen him in this mood before and it frightened her. "Dear papa," she said, going up to him after his rage was over and he sat leaning his head upon his hand—"dear papa, don't get so excited over it. I will be able to make enough for us, which, with your other income, will enable us to live well. Don't worry over it. It will be all right in the end, I know."

Her father did not answer for some time, and then, placing his hand upon her head, he said: "My girl, you are brave and are doing everything you can to earn a living for us, but I must tell you that complications have arisen from my business embarrassment which have left me with no income. All we have, Nellie, is the stock of goods and our home."

Nellie turned pale; she could not help it, and she was so glad that her father could not see her. She had supposed he had a good income besides the store, but must the support of the family fall upon her? It made her faint to think about it.

"Do you think, my girl, that the store will support us now?"

Nellie did not know what to say, and her voice

## The Iron Hand.

was a little faint as she answered: "We will try, dear papa; we will try the best we can."

"What did Mr. Toump mean when he said that he would pay me a good salary?" she said when she was alone in her room that night. "Can it be Walter's doing?" she asked herself, softly. "Can it be that he is doing this because he thinks I am offended at him and still wishes to help me?" She looked wistfully at her reflection in the glass. "He is so manly, so fine-looking. I must do something to earn more than I am, for what is being made now in the store is nothing. And there is little Jack away over the sea, and his parents are so happy to hear that he is getting better. It would break my heart to think the little fellow must give up and come home to die. No, I must do something. I will do anything to keep pa and this little boy happy." She arose as she said this and went to the window to look out upon the quiet night before retiring.

The following day brought to her, during her small business, the proprietor of the big store. He came in during the afternoon, all smiles and bows. "Ah, Mees Jimmy, is business good to-day? Not very rushing, eh? Well, I'm very sorry, but then business is business, you know. The city must be kept up with the times and have

## Springing of the Trap.

big store, like all big cities have. Ze little stores have to go and make room for big one. All ze proprietors not have chance I offer you, though, Mees Jimmy. Some of them kill zemselves; some go into bankruptcy, but"—here he shrugged his shoulders—"ze big store get ze custom just ze same. Have you thought of ze offer I made to you, Mees Jimmy?" he said, in something of a beseeching voice. "I offer you good place, good pay; I buy your goods. What more could I do?"

Nellie looked at him intently as he spoke. She saw the shining black eyes, the small, insignificant body, slightly stooped, and the large feet and hands. "Why do you offer me this place?" she said. "Why do you wish to befriend me and not the others?"

"Ah, I tell you, Mees Jimmy, I tell you all 'bout it. I have great regard for you because I help save your life down there in that black hole where you were that night, and where I see ze devil—ah, mein Gott! dat was dreadful. I know your father; he such nice man, and he all broken down in business now. I like to help him, too, and so I say to Mees Jimmy dat she come work for me. I make lots money when all ze rest fail, and so can give you good pay."

## The Iron Hand.

Nellie sat looking at him intently. She could not help thinking that there was something else why he wished her to work for him. She could not see why it was unless Walter was doing it. "What would you want me for?" she said, half defiantly.

"Oh, I give you charge of ze nicest department in my store, ze place where all ze fine ladies go—no gentlemans—ze place where ze ladies' hats are. Oh, it beautiful there—lovely."

"What would you pay me, now, if I should go?" said Nellie.

"Oh, one hundred, two hundred dollars one month, what you would accept."

Nellie knew that this amount would enable them to live nicely at home, and that her father would be at ease and she could get him anything he wished; but why was this man, who had the appearance of being destitute of feeling, trying to get her to work for him? It must be Walter, it must be—it can be nothing else; and her heart sang with gladness for the fine-looking fellow she loved so well. She had thought a good deal about Mr. Toump's proposition, and had wondered how she could take the place and deceive her father, for to do that she would have to. "I must thank you very kindly for your offer," she

## Springing of the Trap.

said to him. "Why you offer to pay me a large salary I do not know, but trust it is all right. My father, as you say, is broken in health, and should I accept your kind offer I must deceive him completely."

"Yes, I see, Mees Jimmy. Let me see how we can fix that. Ah, I have it. We cut a door from our store in here, so as to make this part of it; then you stay right 'long here just as though nothing happened, and nobody know anything 'bout it."

The result of it was that in a few days Nellie found herself in charge of one of the departments in the big store. It was her old store, but made into a department of the big one. She went merrily and contentedly about her work, merrily in the thought that her father would be provided for and that little Jack could stay over across the sea and continue his treatment. Her heart was glad in the thought that Walter was providing for her and that the time would come when they would have an understanding again. "Oh, business is rushing, father," she told him one evening. "I have been busy all day long. Things are sold cheap, but I sell a good many."

"Have you taken any of our old clerks back yet, Nellie?" asked her father.

## The Iron Hand.

"No," she answered, hesitatingly. "No, I have not yet. The profits are so small that I have had to employ cheaper help. I have all young girls now."

"Oh, curse these department stores!" her father cried. "They not only drive honest men out of business, but they compel people to work for barely enough to keep body and soul together."

Nellie's life was pleasant enough now. Her employer was very kind to her. He came into her part of the store every day and talked with her about the business. She seemed to have a sort of fear of the man, though. After they had talked over matters and she would go to another part of the room she would see him watching her. He would do this for half an hour at a time. She took a good deal of interest in her work and he became complimentary toward her. Most every day he would compliment her upon her sales. "Mees Jimmy, you gettin' to be very valuable to me. You sell lots of goods and make lots of money for me. Ees there not something I can do to show you that I appreciate it?"

"Why, if you think I deserve it," she would say at last, "and wish to do something for father or little Jack, I shall be very glad."

## Springing of the Trap.

As time went on her father began to receive presents. A new horse, a renewal of a mortgage which had become due, and various other things. She had received letters from where little Jack was, saying that he was doing nicely, and that the money that had been sent had enabled him to have care and attention that was very beneficial to him.

Nellie saw nothing of Walter. He never came near her department. She often saw him coming, she thought, and her heart would beat quickly, but it would turn out to be some one else. When in her cozy room at home she would dream about him. "Of course, all of my good fortune comes from him," she would say. "He is so good and noble. He is so proud that he will not give in, but he loves me, I know he does, and some time it will be all right."

Mr. Toump was so kind to her that she began to respect him more and more. He was always very gentlemanly and pleasant, and the first abhorrence she had for him had passed away. They were quite good friends now, and very often he would take her into his carriage upon overtaking her upon the street and they would go whirling along. How she did enjoy those drives. Who does not? To be behind a pair of dashing horses,

## The Iron Hand.

how exhilarating! As they became better acquainted the drives became more frequent until Nellie began to consider Mr. Toump as more of a friend than her employer. She little knew the net this cunning sharper had set for her. Incapable of any emotion other than passion, he had, upon the night when he helped to remove her from the place in which she had so nearly perished, been struck with her beautiful form, and a glimpse he had caught of her white neck made him resolve to accomplish her ruin. He had gone on, step by step, weaving his net about her, until now the time had come to carry out his designs. Nellie had accompanied him so often upon his drives that gradually she became willing to go anywhere with him. One evening, after the day's business was over and she was going gayly homeward, she saw the span she had learned to recognize at a distance coming toward her. With a smile Mr. Toump drew up at the curb and Nellie was quickly seated at his side.

"I haven't been home yet," she said to him as he turned to drive away.

"Oh, never mind," said he. "Let's go and have supper downtown." This was something new; she had never accompanied him on such an

## Springing of the Trap.

errand as this. "We can have a quiet little supper by ourselves," he said, "and, besides, I want to talk a little business with you." She could not refuse, and they were soon seated in a luxuriously furnished room, waiting their supper. There was a strange look in the man's face, such as she had never seen before. He seemed never to take his eyes from her, and every time she met his gaze it seemed to frighten her. She did not return until late that evening, and to her father, who inquired anxiously whether anything had gone wrong, she answered no; that business had kept her later than usual, that was all.

"There's something wrong, Nellie. I know by your voice and manner that something has gone wrong. Tell me what it is, I beg of you."

"Nothing, dear father, nothing. Believe me, there is nothing."

That evening after he had retired he called her to his bedside. "Sit down, Nellie, and tell me what it is. Is it anything in connection with that young man whom I know you like, but who caused my ruin?"

"I have been thinking some of him," said Nellie, "but it will soon pass away. Don't worry about it, dear father. I will feel as usual to-morrow."



## The Iron Hand.

The old man dropped to sleep while Nellie sat watching him. Arising and laying her hand upon the pillow, she softly said, "I would give my life for you," and left. After going to her room she sat far into the night with her head bowed upon her hand and her eyes fixed upon the sky. At last she arose and prepared herself for her night's rest. As she laid her head upon her pillow the pent-up tears came, and she cried as though her heart would break.

## Ole Frees His Mind.

### CHAPTER X.

#### OLE FREES HIS MIND.

WALTER had seen the preparations going on for the joining of the old store to theirs. He of course knew the arrangement and was very glad to have it so, for he thought it would help Nellie. He had felt very sore over the episode of the night when he was at Mr. Jimmy's house last, and had tried to drive Nellie's features from his mind; but the harder he tried the stronger the hold there was upon his heart when the beautiful face did return. "There's no use in talking," he would say, "I must see Nellie and make this thing up with her. Life isn't worth living without her, and I must do something to bring our friendship back again." He often stood where he could see her, but where she could not see him, and watched her. Her spirits had returned and he had rejoiced. "It's tough on her father, and no mistake," he would say; "but then it is business. She is happy now, and perhaps they are all better off than they would have been if the old



## The Iron Hand.

store had kept on instead of being swallowed up in the big one. It does seem too bad, sometimes, that the big store should drive so many small ones out, but then it is business, and that is what rules." There was hardly a day but what he watched her at her work. Her lithe, girlish figure moving about entranced him, but he had as yet made no move toward a reconciliation.

He had been so glad to see her spirits return that it had a buoyant effect upon his own; but all at once it seemed to him as though Nellie was becoming careworn again. Had she had further trouble at home? Was something arising to wear upon her again? Her step was just as elastic, but he thought he noticed a new look in her face—one that was a mixture of sweet and sad. It made her more beautiful, if anything, but he could see that there was trouble there.

He had often noticed of late, in passing a hotel, a man who seemed to be a porter. He had noticed him principally on account of his gigantic form and the ease with which he handled the trunks upon the sidewalk. He did not know why it was, but he found that he was becoming jealous of Nellie. He had not spoken to her for a long while, but the change in her of late had made him uneasy, and although he could not

## Ole Frees His Mind.

tell why he did so, he had followed her more than once to see where she went or with whom she walked. He had seen her one day speak to this giant in passing, and it had made his heart beat like a trip-hammer. How could she know this porter, this great, uncouth fellow? He would find out in some way. One day they were unloading a large lot of baggage as Walter was passing and he stopped to watch them. "You must be very strong," he remarked to the big fellow as he stopped to rest after tossing the trunks about. "It don't seem as though any one could do what you do and do it so easily."

"Oh, that's nothing," answered the porter pleasantly, evidently complimented. "I like to get hold of a big one yust to hear it smash."

"You must have a big business here, by the amount of baggage."

"Yes, we do. All sorts of people, too, we have, I tell you."

"You have some of the big ones live here, don't you?"

"Yaas, lots of dem fellers lives here."

"Mr. Toump, the proprietor of the big department store, lives here, doesn't he?"

"Yaas, he do, cuss him!"

"You don't like him, I guess."

## The Iron Hand.

"Like him!" said Ole, straightening himself up to his full height. "I like him? He drive Mr. Yimmy out o' bizness and I lose my yob. He drive tree more men I go work for out and I lose my yob. Bimeby he start big hotel and board all de people in de city; den I lose my yob agen. Cuss him! I fix him some time, he don't look himself out."

"Do you know how Mr. Jimmy is these days? I know him and would like to know."

"Of course you know him; and you know Miss Yimmy, too, I know dat. You de feller wat helped Miss Yimmy when she fell into dat hole. You know what I think?" he said, putting his face close to Walter's. "I b'l'ev'e dat man tried to kill Miss Nellie dat time." Walter started. "Yes, I do," said the giant, shaking his head. "I b'l'ev'e he try to kill her, or something worse."

"My God!" said Walter, "what are you talking about, man?" He laid his hand heavily upon Ole's shoulder as he spoke.

"I talkin' 'bout de truth. I tell you more if I have chance," he said, looking around.

"What more can you tell me?" said Walter, struggling with his emotions. "When will you tell it to me?"

# THE LAST -



*"I tell you more if I have a chance."*



## Ole Frees His Mind.

"I come and see you some place you say," said Ole, excitedly. "I want tell you. Dat dam villin, he ruin all de business, he ruin all de wages, and now he try to ruin——"

"Stop!" said Walter desperately. "Come to my room to-night and tell it to me."

"All right. I be dere, sure. I must tell somebody. Miss Nellie so good to Ole. I can't keep still no longer."

Walter left. His head was in a whirl and he was almost beside himself. He would go and commit murder; he would go and carry Nellie away by main force; he would go and set the store on fire. All sorts of things ran through his mind.

At the appointed time Ole found him pacing back and forth in his room. Ole seemed to fill the whole place with his huge form, but his demeanor was very different from what it had been in the afternoon. He was very quiet as he took the seat offered him.

"Well, Ole, let's hear what you know. I can hardly wait to hear. What is going on?" said Walter, excitedly.

"No," said Ole, quietly shaking his head. "You sit down and cool off little. You be runnin' out and kill somebody first he knows."

## The Iron Hand.

"Never mind, Ole. Tell me quick. I can't wait," said Walter, desperately.

"No, you sit down and git quiet den I tell you—not before."

Walter finally, when he found the Swede determined, sat down in a chair opposite him at the table, and gradually became quiet, although his face showed his suppressed excitement.

"You sit dere half hour, den I tell you," said Ole.

"Oh, for——"

"You sit still," said Ole, shaking his finger at him. "You sit still or I go 'way 'gen."

When the half hour was up Ole said: "Now I tell you, for you quiet and won't want to kill somebody. I feel awful bad, I do, 'bout dis ting. Mr. Yimmy, I work for him ten year, and he treat me well. I see Miss Nellie when she no higher dan dat," putting out his hand. "She good little lady den, she beautiful lady now. Her father he git ruined by dis dam scoundrel what start de big store; den Nellie she haf to try keep up de store herself. I know her when she little girl, and when her father git into trouble and she go to work, I watch her all I can to see what she do. I take care Mr. Yimmy sometimes, and I find out dat he lost all his money; dat dis

## Ole Frees His Mind.

man git mortgage on his property; dat he git notes of his; dat he furnish money to keep little Yack in Europe. What he do all dis for?" The great Swede bent forward and placed his monstrous fist upon the table. "He fall in love with Miss Yimmy! I watch 'em when dey go ride togedder. I watch dem when dey go walk togedder, and I see it. Dat villin what nothin' could like, he make love to Miss Nellie." Walter sat still looking at him. His face was white. "You sit still," said Ole. "Don't you try to git up. What dis man make love for? Because he want marry Miss Yimmy? No, he don't; he won't marry nobody. Dis man he cause me lose yob so much, he act so to Miss Nellie, I make up my mind. I—I—scare him so he leave here and let Miss Yimmy 'lone, and den I go back to Sweden. I know where he go sometimes, so I go dere and hide in de hall and wait. I ready to scare him good." He looked steadily at Walter now. "By and by I hear him coming. I git ready. But—dere is a woman wid him! I think I know who it is, and yust before dey went in de door dere Miss Nellie's face. I see it under her veil. Poor Miss Nellie! I couldn't do nothin'. She look so sad it make Ole feel mighty bad, I tell you. I go 'way, but if I ever ketch dat dam

## The Iron Hand.

villin I——” and he brought his hand down on the table with such a blow it made it dance again.

Walter looked as though he had had a fit of sickness. He leaned his head upon his hand and said nothing, but his face showed the agony of his mind. “I am glad you have told me this, Ole,” he said, turning toward him. “It’s dreadful news to me, but I am glad to find it out.”

“You like Miss Yimmy, too?” cried Ole, excitedly. “I not know dat.”

“Yes, better than my own life, Ole. I love her now just as well, for I know that what she has done, whatever it may be, has been to save her father and little Jack. We must stop this, Ole, some way.”

“I stop it!” cried Ole. “I stop it de best way. I yust as soon kill dat villin as eat. You want me to? I do it and den go back to Sweden. Everybody be glad of it and nobody care, so I git away all right.” Walter did not answer, but sat with his head bowed upon his hand. “Dat dām villin!” cried Ole, excitedly, “he ruin everybody; he drive all de stores out of bizness, he git all de money, he make all de people poor; he have lot girls work for him for nothin’, and he make fool of Miss Nellie. I thought I come dis coun-

## Ole Frees His Mind.

try where everybody free, but I go back Sweden where man can't do dat. But 'fore I go I pay dis man." He brought his fist down upon the table with a tremendous thump, which aroused Walter.

"I can't say anything about it to-night, Ole. I'll see you again before long, but I can't say any more now."

"You feel awful bad, don't you? I 'most sorry I told you, but I fix him, den we be all right again."

"I hope so, Ole, I hope we will."

Ole arose and left, with Walter sitting with his head still leaning upon his hand.

# **The Iron Hand.**

## **CHAPTER XI.**

### **MIKE TURNS DETECTIVE.**

MR. JIMMY'S health had become so poor and his blindness was so trying to him that he was constantly in a nervous, fretful condition in regard to his family and his affairs. Nellie was his only support now, and he looked to her for everything. He watched for her every evening, and if she was late it worried him. She was always happy and apparently contented, though, and would tell him all the affairs of the day and cheer him up the best she could. He would ask her about Walter and about all his old clerks over and over again. He had begun to notice a slight change in her. He did not know what it was, but there was something he was afraid she was keeping from him. He asked her, but she said not. His remaining senses, like those in all people who have lost one, were proportionately increased in acuteness, and, although he could not

## Mike Turns Detective.

see her face, he felt that it sometimes looked sad when she was speaking to him.

The old drayman who had hauled his freight for him for many years often came to see him. They had known each other so long that Mr. Jimmy concluded he would tell his suspicions to him and try to get him to find out for him. He wasn't just the person to intrust with the matter, but he believed he could depend upon him. "Good-morning, Mike," he said one day as he heard somebody walk in. "How are you, anyway?"

"Oh, pretty well, sir; pretty well considerin', for a young lad. I'll be blessed, though, if I can see how you'd know it was me, when divil a bit can ye see out o' them eyes o' your'n."

"I know your walk, Mike. I can tell any one the instant they step inside the door by their walk."

"Ye can, can ye?" said Mike. "Faith an' I'll try an' fool ye next time I come—I will, then."

"Well, how's business, Mike? Is it getting better or worse?"

"Ah, bad luck to the big store, sir, it's been the cause of me ruin. I used to have good haulin' an' make money, but now, Lord bless ye, the big store takes the place of twenty an' I've

## The Iron Hand.

not much reg'lar work left. I have to scratch around pretty lively now to make enough for the old woman and the babies, I do."

"Yes, it's a terrible curse to the city, Mike, and the time will come when the people will see that when centralization begins, it means ruin for all in the end. I hear from all sides, Mike, about the effect these big stores are having, but still our old place seems to be doing well. Nellie seems to be making money there, and the place is next door to the big store, too."

"Next door, is it? Faith an' the door is between the two, an' not nixt at all."

"What's that, Mike? The door between them? What do you mean?"

"Why, it's just the same as a part of the big store now. There's a big door into it from the big store, an' it's full o' cheap girls like the rest of it."

"Mike, you and I have known each other for a good while," said Mr. Jimmy, "and I feel as though I could talk freely to you. Do you know, I think there's something wrong with Nellie, and your description of the store makes me think so more than ever. Nellie seems to be making money more than I ever did, but I know by herself that there is something wrong. Oh, what

## Mike Turns Detective.

can it be? What can it be?" Mike said nothing, but shuffled his feet and cleared his throat. The feeble old man bent forward and said, with distress pictured upon his face: "You haven't seen anything out of the way with—with—my girl, have you?"

"Mr. Jimmy, no, I haven't. Miss Nellie seems to have charge of the store, as far as I can see, but I guess it's a part of the big store, sure. The money all goes to the same cashier an' I guess, if you don't know it already, Miss Nellie works for that little devil who owns it all."

The old man sat quietly a short while. "Can it be so?" he said at last, "and has she lied to me? If she does work for him, Mike, where does she get so much money? She pays me more than I used to make in the store. It can't be," he said, clasping his head with his hands—"it can't be that she steals it."

"Faith an' I wish she could if she wouldn't get found out," said Mike. "The blasted varmint, I wish I could stale what he's bate me out of. I'd do it too quick for annything."

"Mike, I've lost my eyes and can't see, and I don't want to trust anybody but you. Can you find out for me? Try to do it for old acquaintance sake, won't you?"

## The Iron Hand.

"Faith an' I will, Mr. Jimmy. I'm not much of a detective, but I've a son that's on the police force, an' what he don't know that's goin' on ain't worth knowin'. I'll kinder get him to find out with me, an' we'll see what we can do."

"If you can do it and keep it quiet, Mike, it'll be a great relief to me. Don't let it get 'round, though, for I can't bear that."

"Trust that to me, sir. Me an' my boy can kape a sacret, an' don't you forget it."

"That ugly bastel!" Mike said as he walked toward home; "an' didn't Miss Nellie tell her father that she worked for him? An' she's makin' lots of money, is she?—'m—'m—'m. She don't get it in salary, that's sure. I wonder if she can stale it from the old fox? Be gobs, an' that would be a good one if she could, though. I'll spake to Pat whin I git home, kinder gently like, an' see what he thinks about it."

Mike had great respect for the blue coat and brass buttons of his strapping son, and when he reached home and found him there in all his grandeur, he called him one side and broached the matter to him. "Pat," he said, "I've got a detective job for ye, but I don't like to tell ye what it is."

"That's encouraging," replied the son. "Peo-

## Mike Turns Detective.

ple usually tell us all they know when they want us to work up anything."

"Would ye take a job, now, an' not know who the parties are, Pat?"

"Don't be foolish, father. If you've got anything for me to do, tell me about it and stop coddin' me. Is somebody murdered, or have you had your horse stole, or what is it?"

"Worse'n that, boy. I wish it was one o' thim, but it ain't. It's a girl, Pat. I want ye to watch her an' see what she's up to."

"Oh, you'll have to go to the chief with that, father. I can't take anything of that kind to work on."

"No, but it's one of my frinds, Pat, an' I can't let anybody know about it but you. It all comes o' that grindin', scrunchin' department store on your beat, Pat. I think that feller what runs it is tryin' to ruin a good girl, my boy, an' I want it stopped."

"Is that all, father? That's nothing new. Some of the girls that work there don't get enough pay to feed a mouse, and they've got to live some way."

"Bad luck to the likes of him. If I could have my way there wouldn't be any such. Ye know,

## The Iron Hand.

Pat, Mr. Jimmy, what used to keep the store next to the varmint's?"

"Yes, I know him well, father. He is a nice man. He always used to give me something extra every month for kinder looking after things at night. This man, though, that keeps the store now, he don't give me anything, and I have to look out mighty careful or he'll report me."

"Bad luck to the likes of him, he's cost me more'n one good customer an' made it hard pick-in' for me. Miss Nellie, Pat, her father wants to find out where she goes an' what she does with this man."

"Well, she goes riding with him often enough. I see her 'most every day lately. I don't know that, but I guess I can find out if I try."

"Do, then, Pat. I want to find out, for Mr. Jimmy was always good to me, an' Miss Nellie, she's the swatest girl ye ever saw."

Pat looked the ground over during the next two or three days, and as soon as he had satisfied himself upon some points he one day, dressed in his citizen's clothes, with a disguise, appeared upon the street where Mr. Toump and Nellie usually met. While walking around, waiting, he saw his father approaching, together with a very large man. They seemed to be earnestly talking.

## Mike Turns Detective.

"Who's that with father, now, I wonder?" he remarked. "He don't want to let the chief see him, or he'll make him a policeman pretty quick. I'd like to know what they are talking about. I'll see if father'll know me when I meet them."

"Can you tell me the way to the station?" he said to the large man as they met. "I'm lost and can't find it."

"The station?" said Ole. "W'y, it's right behind ye. You're walkin' away from it as fast as ye can."

"Oh, that big building there?" said the policeman. "The one with the clock on?"

"Of course," said Mike; "an' what would the clock be for if not to tell when the train went?"

"Oh, much obliged," said the policeman. He turned and started rapidly toward the depot, but only went a short distance when he turned and, going around the block, came up behind the couple. "I believe I'll watch them," he said, "and see where they're going to." He followed them for some distance until they came to a lumber yard and went in among the piles of lumber. He thought he would lose them now, but kept on stealthily walking. He stopped suddenly before he had gone very far. It was the big Swede's voice he heard.

## The Iron Hand.

"I see him myself, Mike. He not only want to ruin ev'ryt'ing, but he want ruin Miss Nellie, too. And he done it, I know. Didn't I see dem go into de room togeder? Don't I know what de place is?"

"Heaven ha' pity," he heard his father say. "Heaven ha' pity, but I thought Miss Nellie was the honestest girl that ever lived, I did."

"She be honest!" he heard the Swede exclaim, excitedly. "She be de bestest girl in de whole world. She be so good to Ole and to everybody. What she do dis for? To save her old fader. I respect her for it, but dat dam villin what get her into de trap, I smash his head yust so sure I live."

There was silence for two or three minutes.

"An' little Jack, too," he heard his father say.

"An' little Jack, too."

"Little Jack!" said the policeman. "My little sick brother."

His mind was taken from his work by this statement, and when he listened again he heard his father say: "An' when you goin' to do it, Ole?"

"To-morrow night, at his room," he heard the Swede answer, and then they went away.

# Revenge.

## CHAPTER XII.

### REVENGE.

THE next morning there appeared at Mr. Jimmy's door his Irish friend. He was dressed in his best clothes and had evidently gotten himself up with the greatest of care. Being ushered in to where Mr. Jimmy was he sat down without saying a word. His head was somewhat bowed and bore an expression upon its face of regret and hesitancy.

"Good-morning, Mike," said Mr. Jimmy.

"Good-morning, sir," answered Mike, slowly and embarrassedly.

Nothing was said for a few minutes, during which Mike sat still, occasionally glancing toward him, and Mr. Jimmy moved uneasily upon his chair.

"What is it, Mike? Tell me quick. I know that's what you have come for. Is it anything bad, Mike? It seems as though it must be by

## The Iron Hand.

your reticence. Tell me, or I shall faint, I believe."

Mike sat fumbling his hat, but finally spoke.

"I know where she goes, Mr. Jimmy. God help me, I found that out. She goes to Mr. Toump's room," said Mike, rising and going over toward him.

"My God! it is as I feared! This man, this monster, has ruined me and now seeks to ruin my child. He has me in his power and he has used it for this." He rose and tottered around the room, cursing and mumbling.

"Don't take it to heart so, sir. It may be that there's no harm done."

"No, I see it all, I see it all," moaned Mr. Jimmy. "My child is doing all this for me. She is throwing her life away for me, and I so useless." He walked around the room for some time and at last buried his face in his hands and sat silent.

Mike had sat quietly watching him all of the time, with the same diffident look upon his face. "I feel, sir, as though Miss Nellie was helpin' somebody else, too," he said, nervously toying with his hat. Mr. Jimmy did not raise his head. "I'll bid you good-day, Mr. Jimmy," he said, rising. "I'm awful sorry for you, sir, faith an'

## Revenge.

I am, an' I hope everything will come out right. There's one thing, though, that you're mistaken in. I know Miss Nellie'd do annything for you, but there's another thing she's looking after, an' it's little Jack."

After Mike had gone Mr. Jimmy sat for a long time as he was, with his face buried in his hands. He at last straightened himself up and sat with his sightless eyes directed across the room. "Why not do it?" he said. "My business gone, my daughter ruined, and I a wreck, all at the hands of this man. Why shouldn't I do it? I will, and this night, too." He went to a bureau drawer in the room and took from it a dagger and put it in his pocket after feeling its edge.

"There," he said, "I'll go to his room this evening and hide, and then I'll kill him after he's gone to bed." That afternoon he had Ole take him to the hotel where Mr. Toump lived. Arriving there he dismissed Ole, and, calling one of the messenger boys, told him to take him to Mr. Toump's room, where, if he was not there, he would wait for him. The boy hesitated at first, but a bright new quarter ended his hesitancy and he took him to the room. "I am blind," he said to the boy, "and can't get around very well, so I will sit here until Mr. Toump comes."

## The Iron Hand.

The boy left him and he sat for a long time waiting. "If he comes I will talk to him about the mortgage," he said. But he didn't come, and after listening intently he got down upon the floor and crawled under the bed. "What a position for me," he said. "But I am determined to do what I have made up my mind to do, and it don't matter. If I am caught under here I will act the lunatic and try to escape in that way."

He heard Mr. Toump come in late and stumble around the room, and what surprised him very much was that Mike was with him. "He must be very drunk," he said to himself. He heard him throw himself upon the bed and snore loudly. "Now is my time," said he. "Who would ever have thought that I would be a murderer? I am driven to it, though, and the man's life must pay the penalty of the ruin brought upon my house." Quietly creeping from his hiding place he bent over the prostrate form. He could feel the breath upon his face. Taking the knife from beneath his coat he lightly felt for his throat, and raising the glittering blade he drove it deep into the neck of the sleeping man. Grasping a pillow he held it over his head until he lay still. Leaving the room with tottering step and a dead, sick feeling at his heart, he



*"Now it's my time said he."*



## **Revenge.**

went directly home, and, removing every particle of clothing, burned it. Dressing himself in another suit he sat in his easy-chair and waited. Would they mistrust him and arrest him? He did not know ; he would take the consequences.

# The Iron Hand.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE TRAGEDY.

AFTER Mike and Ole parted at the lumber yard Mike went home in a very thoughtful mood. It was a bad business, killing a man. No doubt many murderers went free, but a good many were caught, too. He hated and detested this man who had come into their prosperous city and started the great department store; this man who had brought his capital from abroad and who cared nothing for any one but himself. He had seen some of his best customers driven out of business and his own earnings taken away when he needed them all. And his warm Irish heart was full of sympathy for the pretty lady who had been imposed upon in order to save her father and to keep his sick little boy where he might get well. "The devil!" he said. "I jest as soon see him out o' the way as not, but that Swade is so reckless. He might git me into it too, be gobs." He thought it over all the next

## The Tragedy.

day, and along in the afternoon he seemed drawn toward the quarter where the man lived. He was uneasy all the time, but he could not have helped being drawn there any more than he could have helped going to sleep after a hard day's work. It was a lodestone which drew him on and he could not help it.

"Mike," he heard a voice say as he was listlessly walking the street. He looked up quickly and saw the very man whose image was before his mind. He was evidently intoxicated and was being supported by the young man he had talked with about Miss Nellie at the hotel. It was the young man who had spoken to him. "Mike, you take this man home, will you? You are an honest man and they don't know you where he lives. I don't want to go there myself." He slipped a dollar into Mike's hand as he spoke. This was the man he detested, but a dollar wasn't earned as easily as that every day, so he took hold of him and started away. He was undoubtedly a distinguished guest where he lived, for as soon as they entered the door he found plenty of attention from the attendants. Many were the winks and nods bestowed upon Mike as they went through the vestibule and up to Mr. Toump's room. Arriving there Mr.

## The Iron Hand.

Toump sat down upon the edge of the bed and looked around him. The servant who had shown them to the room waited, with a grin upon his face.

"What ye waitin' for, ye grinnin' monkey?" said Mike. "Didn't ye ever see a drunken man before?" The man left with the greatest alacrity.

"He ain't a monkey, he's a baboon," said the drunken man. "Get out, ye ring-tailed baboon." He raised his hand and struck at the attendant, or where he stood, and as he did so the force carried him forward and he fell upon his face.

"Faith an' ye'd make a great prize-fighter, ye would," said Mike. "Ye'd knock not only the other man out, but ye's own self into the bargain. Come, stand up here, an' don't act as though ye wanted to shut up like a jackknife. Ye little gossoon, if ye'll only keep yer legs from gettin' tangled up with yer arms I'll git ye to bed, faith and I will. Ah, bad luck to ye, an' there ye go again. I'll shove ye onto the bed anny way ye'll hit, I will, an' git out o' here." He gave him a shove and he fell as Mr. Jimmy found him not long after.

"Mike!" he said as he struck the bed. "Mike!"

"Yis, I'm here," answered Mike, "an' I wish

## The Tragedy.

I wasn't, too. I hate the sight o' ye, ye grindin', ruinin' brute, an' if I'd known ye'd died if I hadn't brought ye here I'd left ye where I met ye an' watched ye die, ye mutherin' divil."

"Mike, go and tell Mr. Nicol that I want to see him, will ye? I pay you well. Tell him to come quick. I 'fraid I goin' to die."

"I hope ye will. I hope ye'll be dead when I git back. I'll go for ye if ye'll pay me for it, though."

"Yes, I pay you; quick, now."

Mike left upon his errand and returned to tell Mr. Toump that Mr. Nicol was not at home, but that he had left word for him to come as quick as he could. As he entered the room he noticed Mr. Toump with the pillow across his face, but he did not think much about it. He sat down and thought he would wait a few minutes before disturbing him. "He sleeps mighty quiet for a drunken man," he said. "If he was a-snorin' his head off it would be more like it, be gorra."

Poor Mike! Honest and kind-hearted, he had come home with the man who lay there dead upon the bed. As he sat there waiting for him to awake there were stealthily approaching him through the corridors of the hotel men who

## The Iron Hand.

would soon show him the horror of which he did not dream.

"I can't wait all night for ye, ye grindin' brute," he said, rising. "I can't wait any longer. What ye sleepin' with a pillow over yer face for, annyway?" He grabbed it off and stood, paralyzed with terror at the dread look upon the dead man's face. His hands dropped at his side and he said faintly: "Holy Mother! who has done this?"

As he stood looking at what was so short time before a man, the door suddenly burst open and he found himself within the grasp of two policemen. They all stood looking at what was before them as though transfixed. Then one of them searched him, and the other produced a pair of handcuffs and clasped them upon his wrists before he knew it.

"What do ye put these upon an honest man for?" he asked one of the policemen. "Ain't I been drayin' here for forty years an' I niver injured nobody?"

"Yes, that's all very true, Mike. You never injured anybody before that I know of, but it looks as though you'd done something of a job here."

"Do you think I killed him?" cried Mike. "I

## The Tragedy.

jest come up an' took the pillow offen his face as ye came in, an' it froze the blood in me veins, it did, when I did it an' saw him."

"You didn't like him very well, did you?" said the sergeant in charge of the squad.

"Faith an' I don't like to say nothin' about a dead man, but he was ruinin' lots of us, he was."

"I see," said the sergeant, "I see. Do you know a man named Ole who disliked him, too?"

"Yes, I do. He lost his job several times on his account."

"I guess we'll take you along, Mike, so come on."

"For the love of mercy, don't think I murdered that man, an' don't let the people on the streets see me with these things on."

"Oh, don't be bashful, Mike. Come along. We'll use you well. Don't be afraid."

Mike went along with his head bowed, and after reaching the cell where he was to stay sat down upon the cot in a dazed sort of manner. Could it be that he was mistrusted of the murder of that man? Could Ole have been there and done it and tried to throw the blame upon him? This man who, when he was alive, had injured him by centralizing the business, was

## **The Iron Hand.**

now doing him more harm than he ever had before, after he was dead. "It'll be dreadful for the old woman an' the children," he said, "to have their father locked up for murther."

## A Ray of Sunshine.

### CHAPTER XIV.

#### A RAY OF SUNSHINE.

THE entire city was dreadfully shocked the next morning to read in the papers of the murder, and hundreds of people went to the morgue where the dead man lay. The store was closed, and the scores of girl clerks stood upon the steps of the store and the sidewalk talking about it. The newspapers eulogized him as being one of the most enterprising merchants in the city; one who gave employment to so many, and who conducted an establishment of which the city was proud. They could not say too much in his praise nor too much against the man who was in prison for his murder. That such a man as Mr. Toump, who was such an important factor in the city's life, should be struck down by such a man as was now in jail. Poor, honest Mike, who had never done any one any harm in his life, read this in the paper himself. He read the lengthy eulogy upon Mr. Toump, and he

## The Iron Hand.

could hardly believe his eyes when he came to the part which related to himself. He held it up to the light in order to see better, and as he did so he could see, showing through, some big black letters. He turned the paper over, and there was a full-page advertisement of the big store. "Faith an' the paper can afford to talk well about a man who puts such cards as that in it," he said. "The ould dray couldn't stand that kind o' business very long, I guess. The ould tyrant, I'm glad he's gone, annyhow. I hope I won't have to stay here very long. They surely will find out who did it an' let me go. I wonder where that bloody thafe of a Swade is, annyway. I wonder if they've got him, too. I wouldn't wonder if they had. Oh, they'll kape huntin' an' huntin' till they find the right man." Poor Mike, he didn't know the police force. As long as they had him and evidence to convict him, it was little they cared more.

It had not been known long about his imprisonment before there came to see him a nice young lady, as the jailer called her. It did him good, he said, to have such visitors, for they didn't come to such places very often. It was with a trembling voice that she went to the jail and asked to see Mike, and it was with wonder

## A Ray of Sunshine.

that the jailer looked at her as she made the request. Yes, she could see him. Step this way, please. As the cell door opened and Nellie looked in Mike saw her, and it seemed to him as though a sunbeam had pierced his heart.

"Oh, Mr. Hooley, that you should be here for the murder! It can't be that you did it; I know it can't. They couldn't make me believe it if they tried forever."

"Faith an' she trates me like a gintleman even here," said Mike, softly. "No, my sweet young lady, I did not do it. They'll find out who did before long, an' then Mike'll go free. I can stand it a while. There's a little money in the ould lady's stockin' yet (excuse me, miss, for mentionin' somethin' that all women wears), an' before that's gone they'll let me go, I know that."

"I don't know what'll become of all of us," said Nellie. "I suppose the store'll be closed and we'll be thrown out of employment."

"It'd be a good thing for the town if the store was closed," said Mike. "I don't like to say nothin' against a dead man, but he made more trouble among folks than you know annything about, miss. There'll be somebody take the store, miss, sure, an' if they do I hope ye'll kape yer

## The Iron Hand.

position, for although it's a grindin', chatin' concern, now it's started there'll be somebody to run it."

"Father wanted me to come and see you, Mr. Hooley, and tell you how sorry he is, and that he knows you could not have done it."

"He's a kind, good gentleman, is your father, Miss Nellie. He'd never do annything to hurt annybody, an' for him to be run out of business by that grindin' fellow what's in the morgue over yonder, it's too bad, an' I've heard others say so, too."

"Poor papa!" said Nellie. "He used to be so well and happy, and we used to live so nicely, and now he's all broken down in health and I don't believe has much left."

"Ah, it's too bad, miss, it's too bad intirely to see the whole city turned upside down by that big store. Why, everybody feels it. Your father has suffered the most from it, but it has affected all the business of the city. Men have been driven out of business, the draymen like me, miss, have lost their haulin' an' see the clerks who have families that have lost their jobs an' had girls take their places."

"Yes, I believe you are right, Mr. Hooley. It used to be a good deal better the old way. Mr.

## A Ray of Sunshine.

Toump has been very good to me and I have a good place, but if it could only have gone on the way it was I could have studied my profession instead of being where I am." Mike sat with his arms folded across his knees and looked at Nellie. He had a wistful expression upon his face, which Nellie noticed. "You didn't do it, did you, Mr. Hooley? You didn't kill him, did you? I want to tell father from your lips that you did not."

"No, Miss Nellie, I didn't. He has done me grievous harm, but I hadn't annything to do with it, tell your father. It looks bad bein' found there the way I was, an' I suppose the police'll try to make it out I did it, but the truth'll come out, miss. I'm not afeard. There's somethin' I want to spake to you about, miss. I'm an ould man who's known your father for many year, an' remember well the day he came down to the store an' said that you were born. I've seen you grow up to the fine lady that you are an' hope you are a fine lady, too!" Nellie's face flushed scarlet and she straightened herself up and opened her mouth to speak. "Wait, miss," said Mike, gently, rising and placing his rough hand upon her arm. "Don't git angry with an ould man like me. There's those that talks about

## The Iron Hand.

things, miss, this an' that, an' it makes old Mike feel bad to see your father——”

Nellie burst into tears. “You mean that father has heard stories about me,” she said, sobbing. “Poor, poor pa! How I have suffered to provide for him no one will ever know. Don't talk to me about it, Mr. Hooley. The man is dead now and there will be nothing more said about him, anyway.”

“I'm glad of it on your account, miss; indade I am. He would have ruined everything if he'd lived, I guess. He hurt business, an' now I'm here arrested for killin' him.”

“Have you any idea who did it, Mr. Hooley?” said Nellie, drying her eyes. “It must have been some one who had a spite against him, it seems to me, for he wasn't robbed, the paper said.”

“No, I don't know, miss. There's a good many as has a grudge agin him, an' some as would jist as soon do it as not, I guess, but I don't know who it was.”

“There's one thing I'm so sorry for. I'm afraid little Jack'll have to come back now. I don't believe I'll get as good pay as Mr. Toump used to pay me, and I'm afraid little Jack will have to come back.”

“I'm afeard it'll be hard luck for all of us,

## A Ray of Sunshine.

miss," said Mike, with a sad look upon his face. "Here I'm in prison an' my family will be sufferin' soon if I have to stay long. There's Pat, he's on the force, but he's so cut up by his dad bein' here that he's good for nothin', they say. If that scoundrel had only kept away from this town we'd all been happy, an' now look at us all."

"It seems too bad that it should be allowed. Why couldn't the Government regulate such things? Of course I work for the big store, and I mustn't say too much, but it seems to have an effect upon everything. Why, I heard a man say the other day that even the churches are affected by the big store."

"Faith an' I shouldn't wonder. The devil himself was in that man, an' he's always workin' agin the Church, so he is."

"This man said, Mr. Hooley, that the big store had been the means of reducing the wages of all the clerks in the city, and that a great deal of the money they used to give to the Church finds its way into Mr. Toump's pocket instead."

"Faith an' that's true. I used to have a stray quarter myself once in a while to put in the box, but now all I can do is to pay what I has to."

"I guess I will go now. Father will be wait-

## The Iron Hand.

ing to hear from you and will believe what you say, I know. I hope you will get out pretty soon and that they will find the one who did it."

"I hope so, miss. I hope you'll come an' see me agin if I'm to stay here. Don't do annything to hurt your old father's feelings, will you, miss? I've known you ever since you was a baby, an' be a good girl, won't you?"

Nellie's face became sad as she looked at the floor. "I'll do the best I can, Mr. Hooley. I don't know what we will do, any of us, now, but I hope there'll be something."

She went out, leaving Mike sitting upon the edge of his bed with a most dejected look upon his face.

## A Plea for Equal Rights.

### CHAPTER XV.

#### A PLEA FOR EQUAL RIGHTS.

WALTER had had his manly heart terribly wrung by what he had learned about Nellie. If he had remained upon good terms with her it might not have happened, this that had. This ruin of his heart's dearest wish had driven him nearly to despair. He had come to love the beautiful girl with all the affection of a strong, robust nature, and it was a terrible blow. What could have been her object in sacrificing what was dearer than life itself? It could not be that she had an evil nature. No, he would not entertain that thought a moment. She must have had some object in it, something of terrible import, to have done what she had done. She loved him, too, for she had told him so. It must be for some object dearer to her than all else in the world, and what could that be? He had thought over this same theme time and again, and, although his heart ached every time the thought

## The Iron Hand.

came into his mind, he could not fathom the mystery. He had seen Nellie in the store day after day, and had noticed the change come over her which had come. Many a time he had started to rush over to her and ask her to explain everything to him, but he would stop and think of the time he had been ordered from her father's house, and the impulse would die out. He had at last tried to steel his heart against her, but he could not. He would avoid seeing her as much as possible, but one look at her would bring up all his thoughts again.

The news of his partner's death came to him while in a restaurant that evening. It was a great shock to him, but the first thought he had was for Nellie. He hastened to the scene and saw his partner lying where he had died. He did not know why it was, but a feeling came over him of disgust as he looked at him. What was the cause of this? Who had done it? His watch was in his pocket, and even the magnificent diamond he wore in his shirt-front was there. Robbery could not have been the object; he must have done some one a terrible injury to cause it. They told him the old Irishman had done it, but he could not believe it. The peaceable, good-natured fellow would do nothing like this. His

## A Plea for Equal Rights.

being there would be explained away and some one else be accused. The thoughts ran through his head with lightning speed in his excitement. Could Nellie have avenged her wrong? This was one of the thoughts which chased through his mind. It was dreadful to think of, but he almost wished it was so.

It had not been generally known until now that he was interested with Mr. Toump in the store, but now that he was in charge he began to be waited upon by different parties, asking him to discontinue his business. There was an old, white-headed man came to him one day as he sat in his office watching the busy scene around him. Walter was always respectful to an old man, for his father's figure always came up before him when he was talking to one. The old man had a cheerful face, which his three-score and ten years had mellowed into an attractive one to the young man. He politely showed him a seat and awaited his pleasure. The old man looked at him with a careworn look upon his pleasant face and began to speak. "Young man," he said, laying his hand upon Walter's desk, "I have taken it upon myself to call upon you; not so much upon my own account, for I am nearing the end of my life's

## The Iron Hand.

race, but upon the account of men and women younger than myself. My father fought at the battle of Bunker Hill, and I have heard him tell of the struggles of the patriots of the early days in our nation's history. Those men who fought the battles then and laid down their lives and spilled their blood did it for freedom's sake. I have lived a long life and have seen our country grow to a great nation of loyal, loving hearts; loyal to our country and with a love for its institutions. I have lived here in this city and seen it grow and prosper. I have been a merchant here for many years, and among many others lived happily and conducted an honorable business. My clerks have reared families and had the comforts of life, and we have all, merchants and employees, lived happily and contentedly." He paused, and as Walter looked into his pleasant face he smiled and thought to himself: "The old story, I guess." "My young friend," continued the old man, "upon our prosperity has been founded our beautiful city, which I hate to see go backward. You are a young man and about starting your business career. Start it honestly and not at the expense of every one else. Do as you would be done by and obey the teachings of the Master, who rebuked the

## A Plea for Equal Rights.

grasping, grinding principle of the people from whom this unfortunate man who was your partner is descended, and think of others than yourself. Your great department store and others like it will be the ruin of our city. I am an old man of many years' experience in business, Mr. Nicol, and I know of what I speak. Your father has been a banker and has amassed a fortune. He has dealt with a community of prosperous business men. Do you suppose he would have made the fortune he has if the business of the city where he has lived had been conducted by two or three such stores as yours, instead of many? Do you think it is right to take money made in an honest, legitimate business and invest it here to ruin others? Do you think it right to bring money from Europe here to ruin our city? To perhaps make you very rich at the expense of every one else?" Walter listened respectfully. The smile had faded from his face and a thoughtful, somewhat annoyed look had taken its place. The old man arose, the pleasant look had faded from his face also, and an earnest one had taken its place. He stood at Walter's desk and laid his hand upon his arm. "Your store, young man, has not been running long enough yet to show its effect very materially,

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but it and others like it will be the ruin of our city, with the centralization of business, with the employment of girls and children instead of those who would be enabled to rear families upon the product of their toil. Taking these girls and children from more honest pursuits and the care of their parents and throwing them upon the world will produce dreadful results." Walter's face still wore its thoughtful look. The old man continued: "I will say but a few words more, young man, and not take up your time any longer. Do not take offense now at what I am going to say; it will perhaps appeal to your feelings, but I say it kindly and with good intent. Your store has driven myself and others out of business, among the number a dear friend of mine, Mr. Jimmy. Not only driven him out of business, but to bankruptcy and ruin. His health is ruined, and I understand that within the last few days he has become almost a maniac. The murder of the head of this store has caused the imprisonment of an innocent man, I believe, and it looks now as though he will have to suffer for the crime. His family will be reduced to destitution, and an honest, hard-working man, who has served many of us for many years, will be the victim of this institution.

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And, last but not least"—he paused and his voice choked with emotion as Walter looked up into his face—"my old friend's daughter, whom I fondled when a baby and who has grown up a beautiful young woman fit to adorn the home of——" He stopped. The young man's face looking into his had turned ashy white and his eyes were full of tears. Gradually his head sank upon his arm, which he laid upon his desk. A surprised look passed over the old man's face, and then a pitying one. "Ah," he said, softly; "a chapter in the story of which I was ignorant before."

Walter's head still rested on his arm as the old man took his leave, and when he at last lifted it, it was with a look which seemed to speak of a strong, manly young heart in dire distress. He left the store early that night, passing unheeded many smiles and, mayhap, meaning looks upon his way, from those who wished to court the favor of the new proprietor, and went directly to his room. He walked the floor for a long while, and before he went to bed had made up his mind to see Nellie and the others, whom he heard had been accused, and learn the whole story if he could.

# The Iron Hand.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### WALTER AND MIKE.

THE next day he went to the jail and asked to see Mike. His sober face attracted the attention of the once jolly Irishman as he rose to meet him. Imprisonment was beginning to wear upon Mike, and Walter was struck by the change in his appearance since he had seen him last.

"Faith an' ye are the last man I ever expected to come to see me," he said. "I hope ye are goin' to git me out of here in some way, ain't ye? It's hard work for an honest man like me to be shut up here for another man's crime an' my family an' my business goin' to rack."

"I am very sorry to see you here, Mike, and I wish I was able to be the means of your liberation, but I am not. I have been very uneasy since my partner died, and have heard that you accused me of being in part the instrument of your being here. Why is it that you think this?"

"I never had nothin' agin a man to amount

## Walter and Mike.

to anythin' until your partner started up the big store. Then my bad luck began to come fast. I lost work an' then, because I happened to go back to where he was after somebody had killed him, they put me in jail an' said I killed him. Ain't that bad luck enough to come from one man, an' ain't ye his partner, although nobody knew it much till now? They say ye was studyin' for a doctor. Why couldn't ye stick to it an' do somebody some good instead of helpin' in that grindin' divil, the department store?"

"I begin to believe myself that the business I am interested in is a bad thing for the city. I have never seen it until within a few days, but it begins to look that way to me."

"Faith, an' I'm not the only one that's felt the heft of it. There's Mr. Jimmy an' lots of others, too, that's felt it worse'n me. My little boy, too, that's been away to git well, he's got to come back now an'—an'—he may die before I git out o' here."

Walter looked at him intently. He had been assured that there was no question but what the man he was looking at had committed the crime. He had been found with the knife almost in his hand,

## The Iron Hand.

"How do you suppose Mr. Toump was killed?" asked Walter.

"The Lord only knows. I suppose most people think it was me who did it, but I am as innocent of it as the babe at its mother's breast."

Walter still looked at him intently, and Mike returned his gaze steadily.

"Who do you think could have done it? You must have some idea about it."

"I've thought about it till my brains is all tumblin' about. I've wondered an' wondered, but divil a one can I think of that would do it. There's one thing funny about it to me, there is, an' that is somethin' that I saw when I pulled off the pillow that night. Great saints above! but I shall never forgit it; indade I cannot, never. Whoever the varmint was who killed him, he couldn't have seen very straight, for when he struck with that dreadful knife he hit all around the bed before he hit him."

"The police know of this, of course?"

"Why, I suppose that they do, but what do they care? It don't make anny difference to them, the bloody blaggards, whether they git the right man or not jist so they can convict somebody."

## Walter and Mike.

"You don't have much faith in policemen, I guess."

"Bedad an' I have not, at all. They know which side their bread is buttered on, an' don't ye forgit it. Do ye suppose a cop cares annythin' only to git his boss elected at the next election an' to do somethin' to git to be a sergeant? Divil a one does he care. Not a bit of it."

"I wonder if there is any one whose sight is poor who had any grudge against Mr. Toump?"

"Now you're talkin' like one o' the coppers themselves, you are. Do I know of anny one who's eyesight's poor that had a grudge agin him? Faith an' there's those that had a grudge agin him by the score; those that can see a good deal an' them as can't. A blind man couldn't do it—do you think he could?"

"Why, I should think it would be very improbable."

"I suppose he might, though. Mr. Jimmy is the only blind man I know who had anny grudge agin him, but he wouldn't do it."

Walter looked him in the face quickly.

"You don't suppose—you don't suppose——" stammered Walter.

"No, I don't suppose nothin'," sneered Mike, "so don't mention it." Walter looked at the floor

## The Iron Hand.

and didn't answer. "Miss Nellie's workin' for you, ain't she?" asked Mike. "I hope ye'll be good to her, for she's a fine lady, she is."

Walter's face grew red in an instant.

"No," he said. "She used to work for the firm, but now she does not come any more."

"An' why is that? Did ye discharge her?" said Mike, quickly.

"No. She has not been around since the night of the murder, and I am going to see her now and find out what the trouble is."

"They say her father's been very bad lately. I suppose she's takin' care o' him. She thinks an awful sight of the old man, she do. I believe she'd do annything for him."

"He was never such an excellent father to her, was he?"

"Yes, he was, though. He was one of the kindest men that ever breathed. He was kind to all of us until that blaggard what I'm here for killin' come. Yes, Miss Nellie'd do annythin' for him, no matter what it was, I guess."

"Well I must go and see her and find out what is the matter. I hope you'll get out all right pretty soon."

"I hope so, mister," said Mike, his voice a little

## Walter and Mike.

bit husky. "Look out for Miss Nellie, won't you?"

"With God's help I will," answered Walter, earnestly, as he left the cell. "I don't know why it is, after hearing what I have about her, but I can't give her up. I believe if she was among the lowest of women that I should love her still."

It was a great effort for him to go where Mr. Jimmy lived, but he felt drawn toward Nellie and he felt as though he must go. He had longed so to speak to her of late, for he believed she was in trouble, and when she didn't come around at the time the store opened again, after Mr. Toump's death, he felt as though he must go and see her. As he went up the steps he wondered what kind of a reception he would receive. A small girl opened the door and ushered him into the parlor. He waited for some time and was beginning to think of leaving, when he heard a light footstep in the hall and Nellie appeared at the door. Her face was pale, and he could see when she rested her hand upon the back of a chair that it trembled. She looked at him as she came in and spoke to him kindly, but sat still and quiet after that.

"As you didn't come to the store, I thought I would come and see what was the trouble, Nellie.

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We have missed you very much, and I thought you might be ill."

"Father has been very bad," said Nellie, "and wanted me to stay with him all of the time, and, besides, I didn't know as you would want me any longer, anyway."

Want her anyway! How the hot blood rushed through his veins as she said it, and he saw her hand tremble and her beautiful face looking toward the floor. He didn't know what to say or do. He had not realized before that he was the master and she the clerk. The girl, who had been gently reared and whom he loved with all his heart, sat before him as his servant.

"I don't know what to say, Nellie," he said after a pause. "I did not think I was going to meet you in this way, and it is very embarrassing to me, I assure you. I want to tell you that I know you need the employment you have had and that I want to give it to you, but I don't know how to do it." There was a look of distress upon her face that he could not stand. He went up to her and, placing his hand upon the back of her chair, bent over her. "Dear Nellie, there is one way in which it can all be settled. I am doing a great business and am getting rich fast. Be my wife and share it with me! In a few years I will

## Walter and Mike.

have enough, and we can go where we please to live and be happy." Nellie's head had sunk upon her arm and she was crying. "Won't you say you will, Nellie? I am desperate. I don't know why it is, but I must love you and always shall. I have thought you wanted to get rid of me and never see me again, and I have tried to tear myself away from your sight, but I can't do it. I can't live without you. Say you will marry me and that will settle it."

He stood waiting for her answer, but it did not come. Her head was still bowed upon her arm. At last she lifted her head and looked him in the face. Hers was pale and her eyes were fixed upon his.

"Walter," she said, "I am not worthy of you. There can never be anything between you and me. Leave me, for mercy's sake, and never come near me again."

"Begone, you dog, begone! Leave my house and never enter it again! Didn't I tell you before never to come here? You and your wealth you brag of, wrested from the business of honest men! Look upon the wreck you see in that sobbing girl, and leave my house or I will do something dreadful to you! A curse upon you, and

## The Iron Hand.

may you see the day your ill-gotten wealth will drag you down!"

At the first sound of the wild, angry voice Walter had stepped back and seen in the door, the gesticulating ghost of his former self, Nellie's father. He listened while the blind man raved, looking from one to the other. Nellie did not raise her head until, as her father finished, he fell in a heap upon the floor. Crying for help, but not looking toward Walter, she lifted his head and began to untie his cravat. Walter waited no longer, but quickly left the house.

## A New Clue.

### CHAPTER XVII.

#### A NEW CLEW.

WALTER's pride was terribly injured. He had been driven from the house before, but not in so strong a manner. He had gotten over that, but this time his feelings were deeply wounded. He did not care so much for the old man's talk, but Nellie, the one he had loved so deeply, had hurt him most. She had said she was unworthy of him. What did she mean? He had seen and heard things in and about her, but he had paid little attention to them. He could not believe anything about Nellie. She was so beautiful and good that the stories could not be true. What he had seen he had laughed at and made fun of his partner. But Nellie had said she was unworthy of him. Did she mean that what he had heard was true? It stung him to the quick, and his feeling of love turned to one of disgust. He believed what her father said in regard to his business, and that he was becoming isolated from

## The Iron Hand.

the other dealers in the city. He would help try to avenge his partner's death and he would keep on with the business. He had all the newspapers upon his side, he advertised more than all the other dealers put together; and no matter what agitation there was against his store, the people came and bought because they bought cheap.

In his room that night he sat late, thinking over the murder. He did not believe the Irishman did it; he did not have cause enough to make him desperate. He thought of all sorts of scenes and all sorts of people, but there did not seem to him as though there was any one who would do this deed. Suddenly he rose to his feet. Mike had said it looked as though it was done by a blind man. He did not dare to whisper his suspicions, and stood there staring at the wall. "I wonder if it's possible that he did it?" he said, softly. "To see him as I have to-night might make one think he was capable of it." What if he did do it and it should be found out! What would be the consequences? They would be terrible. But would it not pay for the way in which he had been treated, if he was guilty, to help convict him? He felt so sorely over the way in which he had been treated that he believed he would enjoy seeing him brought to justice if guilty. Could it be

## A New Clue.

possible that he was the man? Stranger things had happened than that.

He visited Mike again the next day and asked him to tell him all he could about the happenings of that night. Mike told him everything that had happened and how the police had laughed at him when he told it to them.

"Do you know where Ole is, the big Swede what worked at Mr. Jimmy's house?" asked Mike. "He an' I were always good friends, although he's a Swede an' I an Irishman. I'd like to see him, an' if ye see him I wish ye'd tell him to come an' see me. I don't see why he ain't been here, annyway, the blaggard. He might know that I'd like to see him."

"I haven't been 'round there much of late. I was there last evening, but I didn't see him."

"I beg yer pardon, Mr. Nicol, but ye used to be there a good deal once, an' I hoped ye'd take a likin' to Miss Nellie, I did, for she's a fine lady. She's mighty good to Mike, she is." Walter didn't say anything in reply. "Ah, that's it," said Mike. "I see. Lover's quarrels don't last long, though. Ye must excuse me, Mr. Nicol, for I'm an ould man an' I've known Miss Nellie since she was a little girl."

Walter left with his mind full of Mike's story.

## The Iron Hand.

Could it be so and the police be wholly upon the wrong scent, or was it a fabrication of the clever Irishman's?

As the time passed he began to reënt toward Nellie. Why he could not tell, but it was so. He had not been able to conquer his affection for her, and he always saw her now, in his mind's eye, with her sad face, which touched his heart. But her father—he had nothing in his heart for him but hate. If there was any chance of his being the murderer, should he let Mike suffer the punishment if he was innocent? No, and he would go and see the police and see if he could find out anything from them. They treated him well at the police office, but had nothing much to say. "Why, we caught the man we have, you might say, right in the act. What more evidence can there be? Yes, he had told them his story," said the officer, laughing, "but it was too gauzy. Besides, they had other evidence to show that the murder was premeditated, which would be brought out at the trial."

He told the officer that he had heard that Mike had a son upon the police force, and asked if it was so. They told him yes, and where his beat was, and Walter set off to find him.

It was a man with a face full of anxiety that

## A New Clue.

he met when he found the stalwart fellow walking his beat. After introducing himself he told him that he believed his father's story and that he was trying to secure some evidence to clear him, if he could. That his superiors were not inclined to do anything, as they thought they could convict his father, and that was all they cared for. The policeman didn't think it possible that Mr. Jimmy could do such a thing, but if it was so that a blind man had done it he would see what he could do to follow up the clew. A flash of hope passed over his face as he spoke. He had pondered over the murder and wondered whether it was possible that his father could have done it, and also whether the murderer was still unknown. It was with little hope that he set about his task, for from a professional point of view his father was the man who had done the deed.

The night he had heard him and Ole talking about Ole's lying in wait for Mr. Toump he had informed the sergeant, and a watch had been set, but instead of catching Ole they had caught the policeman's father instead. Afterward Ole had been arrested and was now confined in the jail awaiting trial. He told Walter of this. He told it reluctantly, but if there was a chance of his father's profiting by it it would be right.

## The Iron Hand.

Walter thought he must see Ole, but after trying ineffectually several times he found it would be impossible to do so. He felt as though the man must be seen, and tried to have the policeman make the attempt. It would be useless to try such a thing, he said. They would never permit it, and he didn't believe he knew anything about Mr. Jimmy, anyway. Walter went to the chief of police and urged him to let Mike's son be put on guard at the jail so that he might have an opportunity to try and get something out of Ole. The chief scoffed at anything of the kind, said they had the murderer, and there was no use trying to get any uncertain evidence which would shake the case. After hard work, even going to the mayor and getting his influence, he succeeded in getting the promise that it should be as he wished.

In time Ole found a new guard to keep him company who seemed to be desirous of securing his friendship. He was afraid of him, though. He had kept his mouth closely shut since being arrested and he was suspicious of the guard's friendly advances. He knew that Mike was under arrest; they had told him that he had implicated him, but he would say nothing. He was afraid Mike had lied about him and that he

## A New Clue.

was in danger of his life. He had thought of trying to escape and had thought of every way conceivable, but saw no chance. If he allowed himself to get into the good graces of this new guard, might there not be a chance for him? His mind was not an active one, but he kept thinking. One day he thought, "If I can only change clothes with him can I not get away?" He looked at the policeman's blue coat and bright buttons, measured his height as well as he could, and his size, and he imitated his walk as nearly as he could. "We are about the same size in every way," he thought. "If I could only change clothes with him I could get away, I am certain." Should he kill him and take his clothes? He thought over this for some time, but was afraid to do it, and he could not bring himself to do such a thing upon an innocent man against whom he had no ill-feeling. He was sitting one evening astraddle of his chair, with his chin resting upon the back of it, when he suddenly thought of something. He stopped drumming with his fingers and sat perfectly still for a minute, looking at the floor. When he arose his face was flushed and he paced back and forth in his cell with suppressed excitement.

# The Iron Hand.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE CONFESSION.

THE night Walter was at Mr. Jimmy's house, and after he had left, those who were in the house came running at Nellie's cries. They found her bending over her father, who lay prostrate upon the floor. The doctor was called and Mr. Jimmy was restored; restored so far as his mind was concerned, but otherwise a helpless wreck. They laid him upon his bed, a dead man to all appearances, but the doctor told them that in a short while he would be over it.

Poor Nellie! She had always thought so much of her father. He had been an indulgent one to her always; even in his sickness he had been kind to her. Walter's visit had been the cause of the sad state of affairs, but when she thought of him it was with no feeling of anger. Her mind always seemed to have a crushed sort of feeling come upon it when she thought of him. She felt as though she might have loved him

## The Confession.

very dearly had not things happened which had, but she could never love any one now. What would she do after her father was dead? She knew it would not be long before that would come. She thought of it a great deal and supposed that she and her mother had better leave, perhaps the country altogether.

As time passed Mr. Jimmy slightly improved, so much so that he could move his head a little at first and then try to speak. His efforts to say what he wished were pitiful, and those watching over him longed for the time when he would be able to make himself understood, as the doctor said he would. He one day made them understand that he wanted them to read the paper to him. It was after great effort that he made Nellie understand it. It was dreadful to see him try, but when she understood what he wanted and brought the newspaper, the faint smile which overspread his face was like an angel's breath to her. She clasped her hands in joy and danced around the room. Could Walter see her now in her ecstasy he would think of nothing else.

Mr. Jimmy was soon able to denote which articles in the paper interested him most, and Nellie found, with a good deal of surprise, that he always wanted to hear the police news first.

## The Iron Hand.

"Why, father," she said one morning as she opened the paper preparatory to reading, "Ole has escaped from jail!" She looked at her father, a flush came into his face, and his eyes rolled, showing his excitement. This was dangerous and she tried to turn the topic to something else, but it made him worse. So she started to read. The flush in his face still remained, but he was quieter, and she read on. She read how the policeman had been placed to guard him; how it was evident the man was a good deal smarter than people thought, for he had laid one of the best plans of escape ever attempted; that he must have studied his guard's ways and appearance, and had even persuaded him to have his hair cut short, like his own, upon the day he left. But the strangest of all was the way in which his guard was overcome. He said that he was in Ole's cell the evening before, trying to find out something about the murder of Mr. Toump, as Ole was suspected of being concerned in it; that when he went in Ole was sitting astraddle of his chair and arose and offered it to him, as he always did; that he took it, for when he did not Ole would be rather surly, but when he did it seemed to please him; that Ole had a way of sitting with his head bent over the



## The Confession.

back of the chair, and that he had even tried to imitate that, thinking it would please him; that this evening Ole seemed to be very communicative, and told him about the old country and their customs there. He had become interested and was a little bit drowsy. All at once he found he could not move, not even as much as his finger. Ole was watching him closely, and suddenly he arose and laughed with glee; that he had quickly stripped him of his uniform, he not being able to offer the slightest resistance; that he had dressed himself in it and walked out of the cell as unconcerned as though he were the guard. When his relief came and he was taken from the chair he soon recovered. He was placed under arrest, but upon the physicians appearing he explained it all by saying that there was one position in which a man's neck could be placed, across the back of a chair or any sharp place, which would render him perfectly helpless until he was removed. That it was the boldest jail delivery ever known in that country, and that no clew had been found to the man's whereabouts; that the case against Mike Hooley was somewhat weakened, as there was supposed to be evidence in the man to show a conspiracy.

The flush had gone from Mr. Jimmy's face

## **The Iron Hand.**

when Nellie had finished, and he lay as though asleep. As the days passed by he gradually improved in his efforts to speak, until by the closest attention almost everything he said could be understood. He grew more reconciled to his state, and one day, as Nellie sat beside him, with her beautiful face full of hope and pleasure to see him improved, he said, quietly: "Nellie, I want you to send and ask the chief of police to come to see me, or send some one, as I have very important information to give him." Nellie looked at him in astonishment. What could he have to tell the police authorities? Was his improvement the symptom of his mind wandering? Her heart beat hard and she trembled all over.

"Send word, Nellie, as soon as you can, for I must see one of them."

She thought best to humor him and did as he requested. That afternoon, as the sun was nearing the horizon and the day's life was nearly over, there walked, somewhat awkwardly, into the room one of the police sergeants and took the seat offered him. He looked somewhat uneasily at the figure upon the bed, lying so still, with its white face.

"Leave us alone, Nellie," said her father, and Nellie quietly left. There was a dread upon her

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of she knew not what. What could this be, this secret her father knew? Poor girl! she little knew what further trouble was in store for her young heart, or it might have been broken then. The sergeant started as Mr. Jimmy spoke; it seemed to him as though it was a dead man's voice.

"Sergeant, move up closer to my side, please. If you do not know my condition I will tell you that I am completely paralyzed. From what cause I will tell you later." The sergeant bent his head closer toward him. "Sergeant, my life is nearly over. The doctor tells me that I have at best but a few days to live. You wonder, I suppose, why a dying man sends for a policeman, but I have done it." A faint smile came into his face. The sergeant moved uneasily and said stranger things had happened than that. "I was once a prosperous merchant in this city," continued the sick man. "My business was good and everything went along smoothly with me. I had a happy home, all the luxuries of life, and looked forward to a quiet old age. Instead of that, look at me. It will be a relief to me and to every one else when I die. My fortune is gone, and if it were not for my life insurance my family would be destitute."



## The Iron Hand.

The officer listened impatiently.

"Why have you called me to tell me this?" he said. "This does not interest me."

"Does it not?" said Mr. Jimmy. "You have had your salary reduced lately, have you not? Why? For the same reason that I lie here. When the city was full of stores and we were all doing well, did any one begrudge the policeman his pay? What was the revenue then from the taxation of the stocks of goods, and what is it now, when there are two or three establishments that do all the business to speak of and the rest eke out a bare existence? That is the reason; think about it and see if I am not right. I will tell you, though, why I have called you. I am dying, and no power can wreak its vengeance on me but the power of Almighty God, who already has judged the man who brought me here. The cause of my ruin was this man you found dead in his bed not long ago, the proprietor of the great department store. I became so incensed at him as I saw my business being ruined and my fortune being destroyed that I made up my mind to kill him." The sergeant sat up straight and stiff in his chair. "Do you know now why I called you? I called you to tell you that I went there that night to kill this man; that the man

## The Confession.

you have in jail accused of his murder brought him there drunk; that he sent him upon an errand, and while he was gone I killed him. I was blind, but I intended to kill him and I did. I had to strike many times, but at last I struck him right and wiped him out. Take me, you hireling of the law, the law that's made for the rich and for such men as he; take me and punish me if you can. Ha! ha! ha!" and he laughed an unearthly laugh. "The executioner who cuts me down will be one over whom you have no control. It is too bad to spoil your little play. An innocent man is just as good for your purpose as any if you only have the evidence. Let him go and tell him I have only waited to set him free until the time should come when God only would be my judge."

# The Iron Hand.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE IRON HAND.

NELLIE saw the policeman go, and during the next few days saw others come and go. No one would tell her why, and it was such a cause of unrest to her as she had never known. She sat by her father as usual for hours and read and talked to him, but no matter how much she inquired of him in regard to it, he would simply say: "Pretty soon, my girl, I will tell you." She saw that he was failing fast; nothing could hide that from her, and when the doctor told her that he had but a few hours to live, although she was heartbroken, she was somewhat prepared. Since she had known that her father's end was near her thoughts would run upon the theme of their future. She wanted to go and live abroad, where they could commence over and get away from the nightmare of the last few months. She often thought of what might have been could things have gone

## The Iron Hand.

on as they used to. How she would have married the man she loved and been happy in her home. But after the trouble they had had, all she could look forward to for the future was retirement in a foreign land. Poor Nellie! She little dreamed of the addition which was to come to her burden, and it was no wonder that when it did it was more than she could bear. She was sitting by her father's bedside one afternoon as the sun was sinking. She was working upon some embroidery and did not notice him particularly, when all at once he spoke to her. "Nellie." His voice was weak and faint and it startled her. "Don't be afraid, my girl. Lean your head down so you can hear, for my voice is failing me." She knew what was coming, and as she looked into his sightless eyes the tears flowed from hers like rain. "Nellie, my girl, I am dying. I am going before the Great Judge, who will judge me justly. I am going to tell you, Nellie, what you have asked me to so many times. It is something dreadful, my girl, dreadful for you to hear, but I believed I did right when I did it, and although it was a dreadful thing, I believe I will be judged aright." His voice was so faint now that she could hardly hear him,

## The Iron Hand.

and could he have seen the anxious, fearful look upon her face as she bent over him he would have stopped. "Mr. Toump was murdered, Nellie, that night; he was killed for revenge. Your father killed——" That was the last she heard. The head which was bent to hear the dreadful tale dropped senseless by the side of his. What had she not suffered for her father? And this was the end of it. The sun set behind the distant mountain, and still the two heads lay upon the pillow side by side. They carried Nellie away to bring her back to life and to feel the full effect of the last, crushing blow, but the eyes in the other face upon the pillow were fixed, as well as sightless, now, and the life which had been stamped out through selfish greed was gone.

It was soon after it was all over that preparations were completed for leaving their old home and going beyond the sea. They would go where no one knew them and live quietly, for a while at least.

It was one beautiful moonlight evening, when as Nellie was walking in the garden by the side of the house she heard a rustling by her side and Walter stood there. As she raised her head and the soft moonlight fell upon the

## The Iron Hand.

beautiful face, made more beautiful by its sorrow Walter thought it was the loveliest sight he had ever seen.

"It is only I, Nellie. Don't be frightened," he said as she started at his sudden appearance. "May I walk with you? You surely will allow me that?" Her face fell when she recognized him and her heart beat violently. She had wondered if she should see him again. There was no other man she cared anything for, but she was afraid he would not come after the way he had been treated. A flush of pleasure had spread over her face when she saw who it was, but he had not noticed it.

"Nellie, it is no use for me to try to live without you. I have tried in every way I can to do it. I will not speak of things which are past and should be forgotten, but ask you again to share my life with me. I have sold out my interest in the store, so that I am free to go where I will, and if you will marry me I will go anywhere you say—anywhere in the world you wish to go I will go with you, and after this is well past will try to again get into business of some kind."

"Walter, you are worthy of a better girl than I am. How much I have thought of you in

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my trouble no one will ever know. I cannot bear to live here any longer, and we are going away. I am glad you have left that place which was the cause of poor father's death. I know you were innocent of any bad intent, but it killed him."

"I have seen lately, Nellie, that the big store and others like it are going to drive every one out of business but themselves. It has set me to thinking, and I see so much danger ahead in such institutions that I am going to get out of it and try to practice my profession. Let us go together. There is something draws me to you whether I will or no. Say that you will marry me, Nellie, and end my misery."

He took her hand in his as they walked; she did not resist.

"You know what I have to tell you, Walter, about myself," she said, looking into his face with a countenance full of pity. "You know things about me which were better to not have been, do you not?"

"I don't care anything about them, Nellie. They shocked me at first, but I care nothing for them now. There is only one thing I want, and that is you."

"Walter," she said, looking up into his face

## The Iron Hand.

with her eyes full of tears, "you cannot know now—perhaps you may some time—of the temptations, the threats, the insults that were heaped upon me by the fiend who has suffered his just deserts; the long weeks of persecution which I have lived through, and what I have suffered at his hands, for poor, dear father's sake. I will tell you some time. If you will take me after what I tell you, I will go with you where you will, and try and make you a true wife and love you as I always have." He clasped her to his bosom, and they both felt that their lives were one from that time. "Walter," she said as he left her that evening, "there is still one cloud upon your mind in regard to me, I know. Will you believe what I tell you?"

"Yes, Nellie, I will believe you no matter what you tell me."

She laid her head upon his shoulder and, hiding her face in her hands, said: "Walter, dear, I would never consent to marry you were I not—were I not—an honest girl. I know things have happened and people have talked, but you will believe me, I know, when I tell you that they are all wrong." She did not lift her head, but let it lay where it was. Walter could say nothing at first. He had accused her, too, and tried

## The Iron Hand.

to give her up on that account, but could not. What was this terrible experience which this girl, whom he loved more than his own life, had had to go through and suffered? He took her hands away from her face, and, turning it up toward his, kissed it and went away. "You believe me, do you not, Walter?" she said as he left.

"I believe you are the noblest and best girl that ever lived, Nellie, and I will have the sweetest wife in all the world!"

Nellie's brain sang with gladness after he had gone. They would be happy now wherever they went. They would go to some far-off country, there to spend their honeymoon, and then work together in their common profession.

"And so Nellie is the true, pure girl she always was," said Walter to himself as he walked homeward. "It seems hard to believe, after what I have heard and seen, but she says so and I believe it. She will explain it all to me some day, and maybe I should be tempted to do what her father did were this demon, as they paint him, alive to receive his punishment."



## Liberty.

### CHAPTER XX.

#### LIBERTY.

THE prison life was beginning to wear upon Mike. He had kept up his spirits for a long while and made the best of everything. He had danced and sung and chatted with his friends at first, but now his callers were few and he was growing old from lonesomeness. Walter and his family saw it, but the only way was to bear it the best they could. Mike began to lose hope as the days went by, and sometimes the thought would come over him that he was to be hung for a crime of which he never had thought.

The morning after the true murderer was found Walter went to call upon him. The dreadful thing had struck home deeply in his heart, but he was so overjoyed to think that Mike would be free now that he was afraid he would tell it to him without speaking. He found him sitting upon the edge of his cot with his head

## The Iron Hand.

bowed upon his hands. He did not notice him at first, but when he did he greeted him civilly. Walter's desire to tell him all was so strong that he could hardly contain himself, but he was bound to do it.

"Well, how do you get along, Mike?" he asked.

"Oh, I'm not complainin'," he answered. "I might be in a worse place, I suppose, but the devil knows where it would be, be gobs. I wisht I was out o' here, but that don't do no good."

"What would you like the best of anything now?" asked Walter. "If you could have your wish, what would you ask for first and before everything else?"

"Sure an' I'd ask that my little gossoon over the wather would get well an' come back to me agin."

"Would you rather have that than go free again?"

"Faith an' I would. If I could see the little bye's face agin, all cured an' him runnin' 'round strong an' healthy like, I'd be willin' annythin' might come what would. I wisht I could go home once, though, an' stay a day or two. Ye don't know how I long for the ould house an' the childer. They come here to see me, but if I

## Liberty.

could only sit down in the ould room after me day's work was over I would be the happiest man in the country—I would, sir."

"Oh, that'll come 'round all right in time. I guess you're a little down-hearted to-day, ain't you?"

"Down-hearted, is it? Ye be shut up here as I've been an' see if ye wouldn't be down-hearted, too. Ye ain't got no wife an' little ones (least-ways I don't think you have) to worry their lives out about you an' not know what they're goin' to have to eat for supper. Oh, it's gittin' to be a terrible punishment to me to stay here now."

Walter talked with him for some time longer, trying to cheer him up, and then left. He had kept his secret well and Mike was wholly ignorant of his coming liberation. The jailers and men about the jail all liked the jolly Irishman, and some believed the story he told them. When Walter asked that when the information of his being innocent and that he would be liberated was received it be kept from him, so that he might get up a pleasant surprise for him, they were all glad to promise.

He now went to Mike's house. The taint of the jail was even there. The honeysuckles and

## The Iron Hand.

morning-glories seemed to wear a dejected look, and in fact the whole place looked as though something was wrong. He knocked at the door, and after a little it was opened by the woman of the house. What a change there! The former fat, happy face was careworn. Even the children looked dejected. The prison cloud was upon all. Walter went in and sat down. He could not hide what he had to tell from the woman. She clasped her hands and bit her lips and looked into his face with a beseeching, appealing look.

"I have some good news to tell you, Mrs. Hooley," said Walter, slowly stroking the hair of a little girl, perhaps three years old, as he did so. "Compose yourself, Mrs. Hooley. Your husband has been proven innocent, and all there is for him to do now is to walk out of the jail."

Mrs. Hooley covered her face with her hands and cried as though all of her pent-up feelings had broken out at once. The little one set up a wail, too, and rushing across the room, buried her face in her mother's lap and cried.

"I thought I would give him a little surprise. It would be nice, and he would like it, I know. If you can only get ready and go down there with me we'll have him out in proper style."

## Liberty.

"Poor Mike!" said his spouse. "He's been shut up so long that his business has gone to bits, and we have, pretty near, too. But he'll be out again now, and it'll be all right. Poor old Mike, how ye've suffered from somebody else's wrong. He went downtown to get bread and butter for us, and when he went to help a man who had done him harm they arrested him for killin' him. It was jist like Mike, too. That man had hurted him bad and then he went and took him home and put him to bed. Faith an' it was jist like him. He always had a foolish heart, he did."

They went into the jailer's office, Walter and Mrs. Hooley and the eldest girl. He was glad to see them, and more glad to tell them that he had always believed Mike innocent and glad that he was going to leave.

They all went up to the cell together. Mike looked up as they appeared at the door, and his face brighened as he saw his wife and daughter.

"What is it's goin' on?" he said. "I can see in yer faces there's somethin' goin' on. Has little Jack come back well? Is he outside the door there?"

"No, Mike," said Mrs. Hooley, half way

## The Iron Hand.

between a sob and a laugh. "I wish the little fellow was here, but he ain't, and we can't help it. I brought ye up some little bits to eat because ye says ye gets sick of the prison fare."

"It's mighty kind of ye to do it, Molly. Where are they? Let's see what they taste like."

His wife unpacked them with a trembling hand, which Mike noticed.

"It's no use, Molly. Ye've got somethin' on yer mind, I know. I ain't lived with ye for thirty year an' not know that."

"Well, it's no use. I can't keep it up any longer," said his wife. "I can't do it," and she burst out crying.

"Don't be alarmed, Mike," said the jailer as he started toward her. "We've just come up to tell you that you're free, that's all. The real murderer has been found and you are at liberty to go. You can go now if you want to."

Mike looked from one to the other with a sort of a frightened look upon his face. Then, grasping his daughter's hands in his, he began to dance around the cell, keeping step to an old-country song, which he sang in a strong Irish brogue. After he had thus expressed his joy he sat down and said to Walter, who had enjoyed the dance immensely:



*"Mike looked up as they appeared at the door,  
and his face brightened as he saw his wife and daughter."*

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

2. The second part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

3. The third part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

4. The fourth part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

## Liberty.

"Who did it?"

"It was one of your old friends, Mike, one who was a true friend to you for many years. He did it as an act of vengeance for wrongs heaped upon him by Mr. Toump."

"Was it Ole?" asked Mike, in almost a whisper. "They told me he was arrested like myself, an' that he had peached on me, but I never believed it."

"No, it wasn't Ole, Mike. It was some one who was a better friend to you than he."

"Was it Mr. Jimmy?" he asked, almost in a whisper.

"Yes, Mike, you've got it now. It was Mr. Jimmy, and none else. What made you think so?"

"I thought all the while that it was a blind man by the way he cut the bed up. My poor old friend, what will become of him now, I wonder?"

"I have something else to tell you, Mike—something that will make you feel very badly, but I must tell you. Mr. Jimmy is dead."

"Thank God! Thank God!" said Mike, fervently. "I'm glad he is not to come here to die."

A shudder passed over him. It was the first

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sign he had shown of any discontent. He gathered up what little things he had about his cell, and, the jailer leading the way, they passed out through the corridor and out into the open air. How he filled his lungs with it! How beautiful everything looked to him! How glad the sounds of freedom sounded in his ears! No more gloomy corridors for him. He breathed the free air intended for all of the Creator's beings.

The greeting which met him when he reached home—how happy they all were! How the neighbors came in and shook his hands, not one at a time, but both at once, and how cozy and nice his home seemed!

"How's the old mare?" he said after everything had quieted down. "I expect she'll be glad to see me, too."

No one said anything and Mike started for the stable. The family followed. Mike looked in, but the stable was empty. He stood looking at the empty stall and seemed to realize what had happened.

"We had to sell her, Mike. We stood it as long as we could, but we had to have bread. I didn't tell ye before, for I didn't want to make ye feel bad, but the money's all used up and the old horse has gone."

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She cried, woman-like, and the children joined to see their mother cry.

A sorrowful look came into the man's face at first and then it turned to anger.

“A curse upon his head! May his soul rest in torment for this! The saints forgive me, but he's been the cause o' lots o' misery.”

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE EMIGRANTS.

WALTER had disposed of his interest in the great department store. He found a buyer easily enough. He would be glad to have sacrificed what he put in could it have stopped the business, but he saw that there was no chance of that. He had seen the effect in two instances of unregulated competition, and looked upon the business with abhorrence. "It is almost enough to make a man, even one reared as I have been, an anarchist to see the effect of such things."

The worst of it all to him was the effect upon the life of the one dearest to him of any one, the girl who in a few days would be his wife. He knew the temptations with which she had been tempted, the things she had done to support her father, but he knew that, although after things which had been said about her the world would wink and whisper, she was pure as the driven snow. He would take the money he

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realized from the sale of his business and emigrate to some distant country, where in time he might build up a livelihood at his profession.

They had made all preparations to be married, and when the time came and it was all over they left for their new home across the sea. Nellie's mother went with them, and the three, out of many who had suffered from the same cause—none so severely as they, though—were leaving their homes and country, where their lives might have been happy under different conditions. Theirs was a kind farewell from the honest Irishman and his family.

“Good luck to ye, me boy, an’ may ye be happy over yon, ye’ an’ the pretty lady I’ve known since she was a baby. It’s goin’ to be a hard rub for Mike now, for I’ve had to go to work for a dollar a day, but maybe it’ll be better by an’ by an’ the old times’ll come back agin. Remember little Jack, won’t ye? I know ye will. We haven’t heard from him for so long it seems like he was dead.”

“I’ll remember him, Mike, never fear. I know where he is over there, and I’ll find him and take care of him until you can get him again.”

“I know ye will. Ye’re a fine gintleman an’ I know ye’ll do what ye say.”

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Walter had left his home to marry Nellie. His family had bidden him a kind good-by, but they did not care to see his wife, and so the only ones to see them off were their humble friends.

"Are you not just a little bit sorry you married me, Walter?" asked his wife as they were speeding away. "Are you not sorry to give up everything for me?"

Her stalwart husband looked down into the beautiful face, in which trouble had left its softening mark, and his answer quieted her feelings upon that score forever.

"I feel as though I were to blame, my little wife, for all the trouble you have had. We'll let the past go and commence over, and let us try to be always happy for each other, and everything else will come out right."

They crossed the ocean, and upon their way called at the hospital for little Jack.

"Jack Hooley? No such little boy evare dare."

"It must be. He was taken from America and placed there two years before. He was a cripple and money had been sent from America to pay for his care."

"No." They looked at their books. "There

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had never been any one there that would answer the description. They were very sorry, but there was some mistake somewhere."

"Could they look at the children?"

"Yaas, certain; there could be no objection."

They went through the wards and rooms. The sights they saw were never to be forgotten. But no little Jack. What could it mean? They had always heard from him regularly through Mr. Toump, but that channel was closed. They had to go away without finding anything of him. They were sorely perplexed. That man had done something with the little boy other than what he represented, but what was his object? They had to write his father that there was a mistake, but that they would try and find him elsewhere. They notified the authorities, and then left for their home with sad hearts.

Had they been able to invoke assistance from the fairies of the olden times, as some tell us of, they might have been able to have read the little boy's history in a pool of water or some black ink, and if they could have done so they would have read something like this: The man who had been the cause of all their trouble, the one who had seemed to cause their misfortune, had from the day when Nellie was found

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under the sidewalk with her broken limb made plans for her ruin. He would accomplish it by any means in his power, it did not matter to him what they were. The beautiful girl should be his slave, even if it cost lives to bring it about. He had seen in little Jack, when it was proposed to him to take him abroad, a chance for the carrying out of his designs, and had he not been cut off when he was he would have played the card he had kept in reserve if everything else failed.

Little Jack, instead of having been placed at the hospital where every one supposed he was, had been taken to a city in Sweden and left with a family there who earned their living in many disreputable ways. It was a terrible change for the little fellow when he was first left alone in his new home. Could Nellie and his mother have heard his sobs as he cried himself to sleep night after night, they would have been frantic, but there was no one to hear him except those who did not care. He grew worse at first, but as the time passed became somewhat accustomed to his new surroundings and seemed more like himself. They were kind enough to him, and it was not long before his old home seemed like a dream and his new home like a new life.

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He began to get better, too. He was not having the course of treatment it was supposed he was having, but he was getting stronger and better, a little every month. Although the little boy became used to his new surroundings and his old home seemed so far back, he often dreamed of it. In his dreams he thought of the old horse he used to drive, and the big man upon whose shoulder he used to ride, and there never anything seemed so pretty to him as the old house covered with the sweet flowers so far away. He always said he was going back some time. They laughed at him, but he stuck to it that he was.

It was nearly two years since he had been left where he was, when all at once the treatment of his foster parents changed toward him. He received cuffs and blows often and many times went hungry to bed. He was a timid, quiet little fellow, as most such children are, and the harsh treatment sank deep into his sensitive little heart and hurt him terribly. His health was so much better now that he was better able to stand it. Had he been the same puny child of old he might have pined away and died. If he could only reach his old home and hear his mother's voice, if he could only go to ride

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upon the old dray and run up and down with Ole he would be happy again. Perhaps he could find them if he started out to look. He thought it over in his childish mind for many days, and at last one day, when the people were all away from the house, he left and wandered out into the country. He was still lame, but managed to get along pretty well.

The stoppage of the remittances from America was what had changed the treatment of little Jack, and when he did not return, after leaving that day, they did not bother themselves about him any further.

Little Jack had saved some money from the little that was given him every month out of what was sent for his maintenance, and so he had enough to buy what he needed to eat. It was warm, and he slept outdoors at night. His bed was as good as the one he had had lately, as it was. Many were the pitying glances cast at him and kind words said as he went limping along, always inquiring the way to where the big ships came. That was all he knew about where he should go, but if he could get there he thought he would find a way to reach his mamma. If he could only climb up into her lap as he used to do, and put his arms around her

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neck, and feel her warm caress, how happy he would be. As he sat by the roadside when the night was coming on, and felt so lonely, and thought of how sorry his mother would be could she know he was there, the tears would come and the little, patient heart would ache. On, on he went, always inquiring for the place where the ships came, until he began to wonder if he would ever reach it. He was getting foot-sore and pretty badly disheartened and his money was giving out. What if he should get tired out and die upon the road and never see his dear old home again? The tears would come and he would fall asleep, crying for his dear, dear mamma, who was always so patient with him and who loved him so.

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### CHAPTER XXII.

#### OLE AND LITTLE JACK.

AFTER Ole's escape from the jail he made his way to the river, trying to find some way to get away before his pursuers would be after him. He would steal a boat and escape that way. No, that would not do; the boat would be missed and he would be watched for and captured. He had thought of stowing himself away upon a steamboat; that had been his plan; but he was afraid, come to get down to the dock, that he could not do that successfully. He was beginning to get uneasy when he saw a great pile of empty barrels. Why not take some of these and make a raft? It took his fancy immediately. No one would miss them. So, taking four he fastened them together the best he could, and getting upon them floated along down under the wharf and among the craft there unobserved. In this way he kept upon his journey, being compelled to steal what he could to eat from farm-

## Ole and Little Jack.

yards and boats until he was clear of the part of the country from which he had come. As time passed he became bolder, and when he could secured a day's work here and there, and once in a while a week or more at a time. He watched in the papers he ran across for some, account of himself, but saw none, and began to be more like himself. He was strong and willing to work, and it was not many weeks before he found himself where he had aimed for, upon the docks at New York. He had never told any one the part of Sweden he had come from, and he thought if he could get across the ocean to his old home he would be safe. He had been a sailor when younger and he hunted for a chance to ship as such. He found a berth before long, and when he found himself rocking upon the waves he felt freer than he had since his escape. It was a great mystery to him, the way things had turned out. He had gone to the hotel intending to wreak his vengeance upon the man, had been arrested for complicity in the crime which had been committed by some one else, and now was fleeing from justice when he was wholly innocent.

"Man gets into funny scrape in America," he said to himself. "He git good yob, too, some-

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times, sometimes he git noding. Sveden's 'bout's good for Ole's any place, I guess. No big store dere to drive everybody else out o' business and have girls an' children to do de work. I like live in America, though. Man can vote an' have lots fun 'lection time. It's pretty tough sometimes, though, when man vote for somebody who he think his friend, and next day he not know him. I like 'Merica, though. I'd rather live there'n anywhere else."

It was a long voyage before the shores of his native land came in sight, but when they did it sent a thrill through his body from head to foot. His native land! How the pleasure of seeing it again overcame him, and as he set foot upon the soil that gave him birth he experienced the feeling that we all have as we draw our native air. No matter how high the mountains or how level the plains, the paths we trod when children will always appeal to us, no matter what other byways we may have traveled since.

He was afraid as soon as he set foot upon the street that he might be watched. For this reason he decided to walk to his old home, and he started as soon as he could for the open country. Once out upon the country road he felt free again and whistled and sang as he

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trudged along. He tried to whistle a Swedish song, but it was so long ago that he had done so before that it didn't seem right to him, and before he knew it he was whistling "Yankee Doodle" with all his might. He was walking along, with his long, swinging gait, when he saw by the side of a pool of water, in which he was bathing his feet, a boy, who looked up at him as he went toward him. His face was dirty and his clothes torn, and he looked the poor, disconsolate little fellow he was.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" he shouted, waving his cap, as Ole came up whistling.

"You know that tune, boy?" he said as he went up to him. "You never heard that 'round here, I bet."

"I heard it lots of times in the United States," said the boy, excitedly. "I am an American, I am."

"When— You ain't fair specimen of 'em, though. Where in—where in—well, I don't know where in—where'd you come from, anyway?"

"Oh, I've come a long ways. It's a good ways back from here where I started from." The little fellow had not noticed Ole closely until now, when, looking up into his face, he

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suddenly got upon his feet, and rushing toward him tried to grasp him around the body. "Ole! Ole! Oh, it's Ole! it's Ole!" he cried. "Oh, I've found a friend at last! You are my friend, ain't you, Ole?"

Ole kneeled down and, taking the boy by the shoulders, held him out at arm's length.

"Ef it ain't little Yack," he said. "Is it you, little Yack, or ain't it?"

"Yes, it's me, Ole. You remember me, don't you? Oh, Ole, you do remember me, I know!"

"Yes, I remember poor little Yack, but how you get here? You walk all the way from Yermamy?"

"No. I never went to Germany, Ole. I have been here all the time, or near here, and I am running away to see if I can't get back home again."

"You never been in Yermamy? Why, Mr. Toump say he take you dere two year ago, and Miss Nellie she been sendin' you money right along. Why, you pretty near well, ain't you, little Yack?"

"I'm lame yet," he said getting up and walking around to show him, "but I feel lots better than when I came here. Are they all well way off home, Ole? Oh, I want to see them so

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much. Can't you get me home some way, Ole—can't you?"

Ole looked at the little fellow wistfully as he thought of his father in the jail so far away. He hesitated before answering, and then told him that his father and mother and his brothers and sisters were all well and happy. It was a lie, Ole knew, but how could he tell him the truth?

"And did dey abuse you, little Yack, that ye runned away?"

"No. They were kind to me for a long while, but all at once they didn't seem to like me any more, and so I started for home. How far is it to the ocean, Ole—do you know?"

"Oh, it's long way," answered Ole, stammering. "Den you must go with Ole. You find friends where Ole go."

"Oh, I want to go home, Ole; I want to go home to my mamma. I'm so tired and hungry, too. Oh, Ole, you know the way. Take me home, won't you?"

The little fellow looked up into the stalwart Swede's face with such an appealing look that he felt as though he must do as he wished; but how could he do it? He couldn't, and so he

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would try and make the little fellow think he was going toward the sea, but would not.

"All right, little Yack. Come on. We go see if we find de ocean."

Little Jack got upon his feet quickly, his face lighting up as they did so, and taking the big man's hand, they trudged away together. They traveled for several days in this way. The little fellow had plenty to eat now and was quite happy with his old friend. As Ole traveled through the country he found that he did not find the freedom from fear that he had thought he would. He had been away from the old country so long that it did not seem like home to him, as he had thought it would, and people asked him so many questions that it seemed to him as though they were suspicious of him. One night after little Jack had gone to bed, after having asked him so pathetically if they would come to the sea pretty soon, Ole went down to the common room in the inn to pass the rest of the evening. There was a party there whom he knew to be a seaman by his bearing, and whose acquaintance he tried to gain. The result was that before retiring he had shipped with him for a voyage across the ocean, and he

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felt more peace of mind than he had before for many a day.

"We'll see de ocean before long now, little Yack," he said next morning when they took the train for the seacoast town. It made him almost as happy as the little fellow when they could look out over the blue waves. Their voyage was uneventful to Ole, but of deep interest to little Jack. He never tired of looking out over the waves toward the land where his old home was, and he often clasped his hands and exclaimed that he would soon see his home and his mamma and papa again.

When they arrived in port Ole was determined he would take little Jack home, whatever the risk might be, and so they started. They went to within a few miles by rail and during the night reached the old town. It was a bright, warm morning that they walked up the street. Few people were astir, and Ole thought he would not be recognized. As they neared the house little Jack's heart beat hard and he tugged at Ole's hand. Ole rather held back and watched every one closely whom they met. What would they find when they reached the house? Would little Jack find them all there excepting his father? It made his heart

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sick when he thought of his father, for he might have been executed by this time.

They came now in sight of the house. Little Jack uttered a loud exclamation and Ole's heart gave a great bound, for there in the yard, trimming up the honeysuckles which climbed over the house, was Mike. The father heard the shout of his boy, and knew it, too. He turned quickly and dropped the shears he held in his hand. The little fellow ran up and sprang into his arms. He could only fold them about him—that was all.

But now the mother came. Oh, the joy of the mother's finding her boy!

"Oh, my poor, sick little Jack; and he looks so well now. It's only a little lame he is, and, plase God, he'll get over that soon. Come, childer, an' see your little brother come back from over the sea."

Such romping and hugging and crying Ole had never seen, and he stood and blubbered like the great, good-natured giant he was. And the feast they had, and the joy over the return of the one they had not heard from for so long, was too deep to describe, so let us leave them in their happiness and attend to other things.

## Mr. Nicol Investigates.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

#### MR. NICOL INVESTIGATES.

WHEN Walter wrote his father that he had decided to sell his interest in the department store and marry Nellie Jimmy the old gentleman was greatly annoyed. When he read the reason of his wishing to sell, that he had seen so much of evil caused by the methods of the great stores, and especially its coming home to him in ruining the life of the one dearest to his heart, he was very angry.

"Walter is a fool. He had a start wherefrom he might have become a rich man, and to give it up for a girl that I will not have in my house, and to go where none of us will ever see him again. He says she is an innocent sufferer at the hands of the man her father murdered in cold blood, and that she suffered to provide for him. A fine lot for my son to marry into. Well, he has chosen his path and he can follow it."

He had said this over many times, and he

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said it again as he stood in his room at the hotel in the town where the Jimmys had lived. He had gone down there to see for himself if what Walter had told him was true. He had stopped there two years before, when he was in the city to see about investing for his son. He walked about the hotel after supper. It did not seem exactly the same as it did before. There was a different appearance to everything. It did not affect him very much. Probably it was because Walter was not there with him and he was tired. In the morning he would feel better and go out around the city and see if what Walter had told him was true. He was up early and one of the first to breakfast. He was out upon the street, but he had not gotten rid of the feeling he had the night before. As he passed along he came to a fine building. It bore the look that most always distinguishes one of its kind. Its solid front showed it to be a bank. In front of it was a surging crowd, old and young, men and women; some laughing among the younger ones; many whose white hair and anxious look showed the anxiety they felt. The banker stood and nervously beat his foot upon the ground as he watched the sight. He knew what it meant

## Mr. Nicol Investigates.

and soon passed on. It did not improve his spirits any. But he soon came to a place which banished the cloud from his mind. He stopped before a massive building. Its sides were of plate glass; it was bright with new paint and gilding and the windows were beautiful sights. Many stood upon the sidewalk looking at them, and along the curb were fine carriages with their liveried drivers. He went inside. Ah, there was a sight which drove away the feeling which had fastened itself upon him; ah, there was something like it. It was a veritable beehive. Hundreds of people walking about buying and looking at goods; scores of clerks behind the counters. Ah, there was a sight to make a business man's heart glad. He passed along to where the cashiers were taking the money, which came in a steady stream; he stood and rubbed his hands with delight. He walked all through the immense establishment, and it was the grandest sight he had ever seen. He was a banker in a country town, where he had amassed a fortune in honest, steady ways, and although he had been to the large cities he never had had occasion to visit one of these stores before.

There was one man in the vast store who

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attracted his attention more particularly than the rest. He was a man of considerably past middle age, whose fine head and intelligent look showed him to be a business man. He waited until he seemed to be at leisure and then approached where he stood behind the counter.

"You have a magnificent establishment here," he remarked pleasantly as the man bent over toward him.

"Yes, sir; it is very fine," he answered, looking out over the busy throng.

"It is the busiest place I was ever in," continued Mr. Nicol. "I am a business man myself, and I never saw anything to compare with this." He waited for an answer, but none was offered. The man's fine head was respectfully bent, but he seemed to be watching all of the time. Mr. Nicol had expected from the man's appearance to find a congenial spirit in him, one who would admire the sight, one who from his age had probably been in the proprietor's employ for a long time and would take a keen interest in his business, and it annoyed him to find him as he did. He waited for a little and then ventured another remark. "What an army you give employment to here. What a great thing it must be for the people to have a place where so many

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can get work." He looked at the man pleasantly and spoke in somewhat of an entreating tone. The man answered: "Yes, there are a great many employed here," and looked straight at the floor before him. Mr. Nicol gave a shrug of his shoulders and turned upon his heel. He wandered about the store for some time longer and went away with a great admiration of the fine place.

As he was leaving he passed by a large woman, who looked as though she worked hard. She and her little boy who was with her, with his pale face and who limped along, were looking in the fine windows.

"I wish I could have one of those soldier's suits of clothes, mamma. See the sword and gun and how they shine."

"I wish you could, Jack," said the woman, "but your pa is too poor now to buy such things."

"I hope I'll be rich some day, mamma, so I can have what I want, don't you?"

"Yes, yes, I do, little Jack. I hope so, but it's hard work."

"How much does the suit cost?" asked Mr. Nicol, stepping up to where they stood. "Three dollars? Why, that is not much. Do you think

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you would be happy if you had that suit, my little man?"

"Oh, my! wouldn't I!" said little Jack, clapping his hands.

"Will you be a good boy to your mother always if I will buy it for you?"

Little Jack looked up at his mother.

"He's always good to his mother, sir," answered the woman. "Little Jack has been a poor sick baby, but he's better now, thank God."

"Where do you live, my little man? Here's the money. You go in and buy it and then I'll come down your way and see you wear it some time, if I can."

He placed the three big silver dollars in the little fellow's hand and turned to go.

"God bless you, sir," said the woman; "you've made his heart glad for many a day, you have. I hope ye'll honor our poor house with your presence some day, if it's worth your while."

"Whenever I see a little lame boy like that it makes me think of the boy that Walter's wife sent to Germany for treatment. His was a sad case, and his name was Jack, too, I believe. How many such cases there are among the poor.

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It is a good thing that they are religious as a rule and bear their trials meekly."

He had heard there were some fine investments to be had in some certificates of indebtedness which the city had just issued, and he wended his way to look them up. After subscribing for some of them he took his way toward where his friend Mr. Jimmy had lived. He seemed drawn toward the place, and as he passed by and saw the sign in the window, "To Let," it made him feel badly.

"It's too bad," he said, "but I guess Mr. Jimmy wasn't of the right sort for the rushing business carried on here now. I'd have given a good deal if Walter could have married into some other family, one with whom we could have associated, but we'll have to make the best of it."

"What bank was it that had the run upon it to-day?" he asked at the hotel. "I suppose a lot of people got scared and drew out their money?"

"Yes. They had good reason, too," answered the clerk. "I was one of them. I had my savings in there, and if reports are true I might as well commence all over again, for it is said the bank will not pay ten cents on the dollar."

# The Iron Hand.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### MR. HOOLEY EXPRESSES HIMSELF.

MR. NICOL stayed in the city for several days. He could take his ease now. He was rich and was getting along in years, and felt as though he could enjoy himself if he wished to. He was a great lover of the play, and always attended as often as he could.

"Don't you have any first-class plays here any more?" he asked of the hotel clerk.

"Oh, yes, we have some," he answered, "but times seem to be changing some way. We used to have lots of them, but somehow they don't seem to come any more. The people seem to want something different nowadays. Times are hard and they don't have as much money to spend, and, to tell the truth, they seem to want something which you might call vulgar. I don't know why it is, but the people seem to be degenerating—in this town, anyway."

## Mr. Hooley Expresses Himself.

"Why, when I was here two years ago everything seemed to be in the most prosperous condition. What is the matter here?"

"I don't know," answered the clerk. "I know I'd like to leave the place if I could, and there are a good many more like me, too."

"It seems too bad there should anything happen to spoil the future of this city. I always thought it was pretty heavily in debt, but everything was so prosperous I thought it could have no setback."

"Indeed it was. We had as enterprising a city then as one would wish to see, but somehow or other it's begun to go down hill now."

"There is one place where they seem to be making money, whether the rest do or not."

"Where's that?"

"Why, up at the department store. It's the busiest place I was ever in in my life."

"Yes. Some lay the hard times to the department stores. There was only one here at first, but now there are three. Some think they drive everybody else out of business but themselves, and that the law should in some way regulate such things, but it's one thing to talk about it and another to do it. They brought it up at

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the last term of the Legislature, but only made a lot of fuss out of it."

"Well, I guess I'll have to look into these things a little," said the old man. "It seems strange to see such a change in so short a time."

"If you will go and see Mike Hooley I think he can tell you, from experience, more about this than I can. He's only a drayman, but he is intelligent and reads a great deal, and can place the matter before you in good shape, or I am mistaken."

"He sent one of his boys to Germany, didn't he?"

"Yes. He supposed he went to Germany, but through some hocus pocus it seems he didn't go there, but went somewhere else."

"I believe I'll call 'round and see them, anyway. Sometimes men who know nothing of business can give one more information than a business man."

One evening before he left he walked down toward Mike's house. As he approached the long, low building, buried in its flowers and vines, which shed their fragrance far and near, he could see Mike sitting in the doorway with the little lame boy leaning against his knee.

## Mr. Hooley Expresses Himself.

"Good-evening, Mr. Hooley," he said, opening the gate. "You have a lot of beautiful flowers here."

"Yis, sir. Walk in, sir. We do have a good many flowers an' no mistake. But thin, I says to the old woman, 'Why not have 'em? They don't cost nothin' an' they make home look cheerful,' an' the Lord knows it's hard to see annything cheerful nowadays with nothin' to do."

"With nothing to do!" exclaimed Mr. Nicol. "Why, you have a horse and dray there, I see. You ought to be able to make a living with that!"

"Of course I makes a livin'. It's jist a livin' an' no more. It takes a good deal to feed a family like mine, sir."

"Yes, no doubt but what it does. How is the little lame boy getting along?"

"Oh, he did nicely while he was beyond the say. If he could have stayed there a while longer he'd been cured intirely, but he had to lave because the money give out. Miss Nellie, God bless her, sent the little chap over there, but when bad luck came to thim she couldn't send anny more."

## The Iron Hand.

"You used to do pretty well at draying, didn't you, some time ago?"

"Yis, I did, indade I did. I made money once the same as everybody did, but who's makin' money in this city now?" He spoke with sudden animation, and the muscles of his weather-beaten neck swelled as he spoke. "What chance is there for a poor man to make annything now? Where I used to have a dozen good customers, who paid me well because they were makin' money, too, there's what now? One big store! An' it's mighty little money the drayman makes that does their haulin', be gobs!"

"The big store has crowded the others out, has it?"

"Jist so, sir; jist so! Why, two or three years ago the city was full of stores. They made the street look nice, they gave employment to lots of men and women—men and women that had families, be gorra; but who do the big department stores employ? Girls, some of them that ought to be at home with their mothers! **Some** of them that are nothing but children! An' that ain't the worst of it! What do they pay these girls? They pays them so little that they drives many of them to the

## Mr. Hooley Expresses Himself.

divil! They're the curse of the city, sir, an' the people will find it out some time."

"But the people buy cheaper of them than they could elsewhere if the old stores were running. Isn't it for the good of the people that these big stores should exist?"

"No, sir!" Mike fairly shouted it. "Which is the best for you, that all the business should be done by two or three big stores or by two or three hundred smaller ones?"

"Why," hesitatingly answered Mr. Nicol, "there'd be no money in banking if the business of the country should come to that."

"Ah," said Mike triumphantly, "I'm glad to hear ye say that. What effect does it have on the laborin' man when the business is all done by a few? It cuts his wages down, of course. Two or three of them big stores gits to runnin' each other on prices. Who has to pay for it? The ones as works for 'em, of course. Other stores says: 'We are payin' too much wages; that big store there pays only so much.' Down comes the wages. An' the people, they thinks they're gittin' things cheap, an' they does, but what be the goods? Rotten, good-for-nothin' stuff. Which is the best, to git good things an' pay a good price for them, or git miserable stuff

## The Iron Hand.

an' git it cheap? Oh, the big stores, sir, is the ruin of everything. They ruins other business men, they ruins the wages, they ruins the city, an' they ruins the girls what work for 'em. You cannot deny, sir, but that the big store that Mr. Toump used to run caused the death an' ruin of Mr. Jimmy, as honest an' good a man as ever lived. It made him a murderer, too. It ruined his daughter. I beg your pardon, sir, but it hurt you, too, by makin' you against your own son. It made a poor man of me, an' when it drove your son and Miss Nellie, God bless her, away, it stopped little Jack from getting well, an' he'll be lame all his life. How many more, sir, are there who's in the same fix? We don't know, but there's lots o' men been driven out o' business. Look at what stores rents for downtown, sir! Stores what used to pay big rent, because they had good business, now don't pay enough to pay the taxes with. What made the bank fail the other day? They had money lent to stores what had been drove out o' business. How does the big store help the poor man there? I know an old man what lives next door to me had all his money he'd saved in there, an' now he ain't got nothin'. I tell you, sir, if its goes on it's goin' to kill this city an' drive all the

## Mr. Hooley Expresses Himself.

people away, for there won't be nothin' for them to do."

"I don't know but what you're right, Mike. I've noticed something here that's seemed strange to me. I couldn't tell what it was before, but I can see it now. I've just bought some certificates of indebtedness and I begin to think I'd better sell 'em."

"Certificates of indebtedness!" said Mike, disgustedly. "What makes the city have to make such things? Because they can't tax enough to pay their debts! An' why? The big stores only pays a small tax; they some way beat the assessor every time; but what does they tax other people for? Their value in full! They can take the bed out from under my little boy when he has been sick, to pay my taxes; but what does they do to the big stores? Oh, Mr. Nicol, if the times was back agin like they used to be; if the law, which they tells us is for the people, would only let every one have a chance, how happy we would all be agin. When you're goin' home, sir, jist walk down the street the big store is on an' see whether it looks like it did two years ago!"

# The Iron Hand.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### CONVINCED.

MR. NICOL left the house in a thoughtful mood. He had things awakened in his breast by this workingman's plea that would have lain dormant had they come from the lips of a business man. But here was a man who had suffered from the effects of the evil and who had seen others suffer, and his plain, homely speech had awakened thoughts within him of which he had no knowledge. He was an upright man as the world went. He believed in what was best for the good of the people, but his education had been wholly commercial, and he had never thought before that the centralization of trade would work any harm. He had walked for some distance, thinking over the new things which had presented themselves, when he stopped at a drinking fountain for a cup of

## Convinced.

water. The fountain was in a dilapidated state, and while quenching his thirst as best he might there was an old man came up and waited his opportunity to drink. Mr. Nicol remarked to him as he handed him the cup that it was too bad such a great convenience as that was should be kept in such a condition. The old man was a very old man. His hair was white as snow and fell upon his shoulders, and his beard, of the same color, reached half way to his waist.

"It's the way with everything in the city," he answered. "Everything is going to rack and ruin here."

"It seems too bad that such a fine place as this is should suffer as it seems to be doing."

"Give us back the days of only two years ago," continued the stranger, "and see how quickly everything will right itself! When the city was prosperous everything was kept in good shape! The business of the city was scattered over its entire surface and taxation was not a burden. Look at it now. The great bulk of the business is done by two or three great stores, who rob the tax gatherer as they rob every one else."

"You feel pretty deeply about the matter, I see."

"Indeed I do. I retired from business before

## The Iron Hand.

the change came, so it has not injured me directly, but I have seen my friends ruined and driven out of business by this octopus, the department store. Men who loved the city where they had been born and bred and had its every interest at heart. I have seen one of my friends driven to do murder by it, and his family ruined and scattered. Oh, it makes me sick to see our city being ruined by them."

"Is there no help for it?"

"There does not seem to be. The public is influenced in its blindness, to a great extent, by the newspapers, and whose side do they take? It is easily answered. Look here," he said, drawing a newspaper from his pocket and opening it. "Look at that," pointing to a full-page advertisement. "Do the newspapers dare to antagonize such a customer as that?"

"I was here two years ago, and I thought it was one of the most prosperous and thriving places I was ever in."

"Will you walk down the street with me?"

"Yes, certainly."

They had gone but a short distance when the old gentleman said:

"Look at the pavement. How does it look to you?"

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"Why, I never saw anything like it. It is a disgrace to your city, and I do not see how they tolerate it."

"How were these stores when you were here before?" asked the old man, waving his hand so as to take in all the buildings for some distance. They were to a great extent empty.

"Why, these were all full when I was here before! I remember how business seemed to be remarkably good along here."

"Can the owners pay for good pavements in front of their buildings from the incomes they derive from them? The stores which are rented do not, in many cases, pay the taxes upon the property. Look at their appearance! Unsightly for want of paint, their windows full of show bills; but it makes me sick to think of it. The city cannot raise money enough to pay the teachers in the public schools. What a disgrace to see everything catering to the wishes of the big store! What do they care for the good of the city? Nothing. They don't care for anybody or anything."

"Do you think that the department store is the cause of this?"

"Do I believe it? I do not have to believe it. I know it. We see our banks fail, we see our

## The Iron Hand.

taxes unpaid, we see our empty stores, we see our rotting pavements, we see our city issuing certificates of indebtedness, we see our schools suffering for lack of funds and many other things. Would this be so if the business of the city was scattered over it among men who are loyal to its interests? What do these great stores care about the welfare of the city? They have but one object, and that is to drive every one out of business but themselves and to make money at the expense of everything—honesty, fair dealing, virtue, and everything else that is good.”

“You speak very plainly, sir, and as though you meant it. What remedy do you propose to cure the evil?”

“There is none. None that can be applied. They laugh at us in our helplessness, and we have to bear it.”

“Yes, but, my friend, the majority rules in our country. Cannot laws be enacted to remedy the evil?”

“There is no hope. It has been tried, but with no avail. The Legislature will do nothing.”

They separated soon after this and Mr. Nicol went to his hotel.

“I sometimes think,” he said to himself as he

## Convinced.

was sitting in an easy-chair before the fireplace, "although it is my duty to uphold them, that these trusts, which include the department stores, of course, are becoming very threatening to the stability of our Government. It is true that we have political liberty among us, but it looks to me sometimes as though the common people have more rights in monarchical governments than we have. Ah, well, I will not bother my head about it. I am rich and I don't care. Things will be all right as long as I live, and after that it will not make much difference to me. I wish, though, that my boy could be with me in my old age. I would be willing to forgive his wife anything myself, so that he could live here, but his mother and sisters will not. I don't believe the girl ever did anything bad, and Walter says so, too, but things looked bad, and I'll have to give up. What a ruin there has been in that family. It makes me feel sad to think of it. The father a murderer and the daughter——" He stopped and nervously tapped his foot upon the floor. "And the girl was caring for the little sick boy, too. It is too bad, too bad."

That night he had a troubled dream. A long, gaunt arm reached toward him and clutched his throat.

## **The Iron Hand.**

**"Who are you?" he asked the figure.**

**"I am," and he gave a most hideous grimace—  
"I am the spirit of departed Equal Rights! The  
time was in your fair land when I lived and was  
happy, but there was a monster who killed me.  
His name was Concentration of Capital, and he  
took me by the throat, one time when I was  
struggling with him, and before I could recover  
he strangled me. There have others joined me  
since; the spirits of many who fought and died  
that I might live. Take warning while you may,  
for we will return some day and our vengeance  
will be terrible."**

**Mr. Nicol awoke with a start. Long after he  
was wide awake he saw the specter before his  
eyes. For weeks after the warning seemed to  
ring in his ears. Take warning! Take warn-  
ing! Take warning!**

**THE END.**











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